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CBS Primary Dundalk Protected Disclosure Policy

What is a Protected Disclosure?

"A protected disclosure means disclosure of relevant information, which in the reasonable belief of the worker, tends to show one or more relevant wrongdoings and which came to the attention of the worker in connection with their employment".

In making a disclosure, a worker must reasonably believe the information disclosed to be substantially true. No worker will be penalised simply by getting it wrong so long as the worker had a reasonable belief that the information disclosed shows or tends to show wrongdoing.

The Protected Disclosures (Whistle-blowers) Act 2014

The above Act came into effect on the 16th of July 2014. Schools are required to put a Protected Disclosure policy in place which meets the requirements of the Act. The Board of Management of CBS Primary Dundalk takes the issue of wrongdoing seriously and, as a result, has drafted this policy.

What are "Relevant Wrongdoings"?

Relevant Wrongdoings include but are not limited to the following:

- The commission of an offence.
- Non-compliance with a legal obligation
- Danger to Health & Safety of an individual.
- Improper use of public funds.

The relevant wrongdoings may already have taken place, be happening or be likely to happen.

Who is a Worker as far as a school is concerned?

- All current and former employees (including permanent, temporary, fixed-term, casual and substitute);
- Contractors and consultants engaged in carrying out work or services for the school;
- Agency workers;
- Individuals on work experience, undertaking a training course and trainees of/with the school.

To whom do you make the Disclosure?

The vast majority of disclosures should be made, orally or in writing, to the school Principal or the Chairperson of the Board of Management (BOM). Where this is inappropriate or impossible, there is provided a list of "Prescribed Persons". Concerning schools, the Prescribed Person is the Secretary-General of the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

What protections are available to whistle-blowers (Disclosers)?

Among the protections are:

- Protection from dismissal.
- Up to 5 years' remuneration for unfair dismissal.
- Protection of identity (subject to certain exceptions)
- Protection from penalisation by the school Board of Management.

What is the best practice?

If you, as a staff member, have a genuine or reasonable concern that there is wrongdoing in the school, you should report it to the Principal. If this is not appropriate or possible, you should then report it to the Chairperson of the Board of Management. Workplace grievances should be reported in the usual manner and are not covered by this policy. It should be noted that while internal reporting is encouraged, you have the option to raise concerns outside of the school's Board of Management and report to the Secretary-General of the DES.

Confidentiality

CBS Primary Dundalk is committed to protecting the worker's identity, making a protected disclosure, and ensuring that protected disclosures are treated in confidence. However, there are circumstances, as outlined in the 2014 Act, where confidentiality cannot be maintained, for example, where the Discloser makes it clear that they have no objection to their identity being disclosed, or the identity of the Discloser is critical to an investigation of the matter raised. If it is decided that confidentiality cannot be maintained in the context of an investigation. In that case, the school will inform the Discloser in advance that their identity will be disclosed.

Implementation and Review

The Board of Management adopted this policy in September 2022.

Signed: Deirdre Kerr, Chairperson, BOM Date: October 2024.

Signed: Eileen Hart, Principal, Date: October 2024.

Date of next review: Sept 2025