



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Applies to:	All employees
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Committee Responsible	Finance and Estates Committee
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Other related polices and documents	

The School has adopted this policy and the accompanying procedure on whistleblowing to enable members of staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, and failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour, or unethical conduct. The policy also provides if necessary, for such concerns to be raised outside the organisation.

With reference to Keeping Children Safe In Education (KCSIE) and Working Together to safeguard children (WT), the key principles in summary are:

- The School has a culture of safety in raising concerns
- It has a culture of valuing staff and of reflective practice
- Procedures are in place for reporting and handling concerns, including poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the School's safeguarding regime, provision of mediation and dispute resolution where necessary
- Training and support is provided for staff at induction and part of safeguarding training
- The School maintains transparency and accountability in relation to how concerns are received and handled.

About this Policy

The School is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity, and expects all staff to maintain high standards. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur.

The School's policy on whistleblowing is intended to demonstrate that it: -

- Will not tolerate malpractice
- Respects the confidentiality of staff raising concerns and will provide procedures to maintain confidentiality so far as is consistent with progressing the issues effectively
- Will provide the opportunity to raise concerns outside of the normal line management structure where this is appropriate
- Will invoke the School's Disciplinary procedure in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations
- Will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all members of staff.

Procedure

This procedure is separate from the School's adopted procedures regarding grievances.

Individuals should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise grievances about their personal employment situation. If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this procedure, you should seek advice from the Headmaster or the Bursar.

This procedure is to enable members of staff to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the School.

Malpractice is not easily defined; however, it includes allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to the staff code of conduct/ethics, criminal activities, or failing to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice, or creating or ignoring a serious risk to health, safety or the environment.

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to suspected malpractice within the School. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected malpractice affecting any of the School's activities (a whistleblowing concern), you should report it under this procedure.

If staff and volunteers feel unable to raise an issue with the School, or feel that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they may use other whistleblowing channels, such as:

- the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline (tel: 0800 028 0285 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk).
- Public Concern at Work (an independent whistleblowing charity) (helpline: (020) 7404 6609, email: whistle@pcaw.co.uk, website: www.pcaw.co.uk).

Confidentiality

We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this procedure. However, if you wish to raise a concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know your identity, this will be discussed with you.

If there is evidence of criminal activity, then the Police will, in all cases, be informed.

We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult, or impossible, if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should discuss this with the Headmaster or Bursar, and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt, you can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are set out above.

Raising a whistleblowing concern

You are at liberty to raise a whistleblowing concern with the Headmaster, or Deputy Head, or the Bursar.

A meeting will be arranged with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this procedure. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information as the concerns raised are investigated.

Any concern raised will be investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. You will be kept informed of progress and, whenever possible and subject to third party rights, informed of the resolution. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation, or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

If you are not satisfied that your concern is being properly dealt with, you will have a right to raise it in confidence with the Headmaster, if you have not already done so. Should you remain dissatisfied with the way in which your concern has been dealt with, you have a right to raise it in confidence with the Chair of Governors.

External Procedures

Where all internal procedures have been exhausted, a member of staff shall have a right of access to an external person/body. This may include (depending on the subject matter of the disclosure) HMRC, the Audit Commission, the Health and Safety Executive and/or the Local Authority Designated Officer (where the disclosure relates to a child protection issue).

It should be noted that under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where a member of staff may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where the individual reasonably believes :-

- That exceptionally serious circumstances justify it;
- That the School would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence;
- Where they believe they would be victimised by the School;
- Where the Secretary of State has ordered it.

Malicious Accusations

False, malicious, vexatious or frivolous accusations will be dealt with under the School's Disciplinary Procedure.

Protection from Reprisal or Victimization

No member of staff will suffer a detriment, or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern, providing that they do so in good faith and following the Whistleblowing procedures.