Whistle Blowing

Date	Review Date	Coordinator	Nominated Governor
January 2025	January 2027	D. Edwards	D. Childerhouse

Introduction

Employees may be the first to realise that there could be something seriously wrong within the School. However, they may feel that speaking up would be disloyal to colleagues or to the School community. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice. The purpose of this Policy and the Whistleblowing Procedure is to make it clear that employees can raise concerns in confidence without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

The School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, integrity and accountability. We expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the School's work to come forward and voice those concerns.

Scope

There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to lodge grievances relating to their employment. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures, including the complaints procedure.

It should be emphasised that this Policy is intended to assist individuals who have discovered malpractice or serious wrongdoing, provided they make the disclosure in accordance with the Policy. It is not designed to question financial, business or operational decisions taken by the School nor may it be used to reconsider any matters that have already been addressed under the Grievance or Disciplinary procedures. Individuals who make disclosures outside the arrangements set out here will not be protected under this Policy and may not be protected under the Act.

The School recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If you raise your concern based on reasonable belief and in good faith, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and the public and The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 will protect you from dismissal or other detriment.

The School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith, even if you are genuinely mistaken in your concerns. Any harassment or victimisation of a whistleblower may result in disciplinary action against the person responsible for the harassment or victimisation.

1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated and that their confidentiality will be respected
- Let all staff in the school know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the school
- Set clear procedures for how the school will respond to such concerns
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing concern
- Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue)

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the School in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

2. Legislation

This policy has been written in line with government guidance on whistle-blowing. We also take into account the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 the Employment Rights Act 1996 and any subsequent amendments or acts.

3. Definition of whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistle-blowing include (but aren't limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staffs' health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Damage to the environment

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the school count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying, or harassment do not usually count as whistle-blowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

When staff have a concern, they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- Further guidance on the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- A free and confidential advice line

4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern

We always recommend raising concerns as early as possible. The procedure for raising concerns under this policy is as follows.

4.1 When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in section 3 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or School procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up. If necessary, staff should refer to guidance or seek advice.

4.2 Who to report to

Staff should report their concern to the Head Teacher. If the concern is about the Head Teacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Chair of governors named in this document. Contact details for the Chair of governors are published on the school website.

4.3 How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

5. School procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern

Our procedure for responding to a concern is as follows.

5.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the Head Teacher - referred to from here as the 'recipient' - they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting and record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure
- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken (see section 6 of this policy)
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:
    - The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving colleagues if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In other cases, they may need to report the matter to the police or other external body
    - The person who raised the concern should be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps

5.2 Outcome of the investigation

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the headteacher, governors and other staff if necessary will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

6. Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

7. Escalating concerns beyond the school

The school encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 4 of this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included here.

The Protect advice line, linked to in section 3 of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

If you do take the matter outside the School, you should be careful not to disclose confidential information, and ensure that you comply with the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 so that you do not lose the protection of the Act against dismissal or other detriment.

8. Approval

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

These procedures have been agreed by the board of governors, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

▪ Whole School Safeguarding Policies	▪ Confidentiality
▪ Grievance	▪ Data Protection/GDPR
▪ Complaints & Compliments	▪ Disciplinary

Headteacher:	D. Edwards (Head)	**Date:**	January 2025
Chair of Governing Body:	D. Childerhouse (Chair)	**Date:**	January 2025

Appendix A – Whistleblowing form

Please complete this form and send it to the: Chair of Governors, Daniel Childerhouse, C/O 65/67 Knowland Grove Norwich, NR5 8YD or office@futureeducation.org.uk

Name:
Address or Contact Details:
Best Time to Contact You:

Person Assisting You (e.g. relative, friend, union official)
Address: Post Code:
Telephone:

Details of your concern (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Signature……Date……

CONFIDENTIALITY

Thank you for completing this form. Your concern will be treated in confidence. Within 7 working days of receipt of your concern the person appointed to investigate your concern will write to you as set out in paragraph 3 of the Whistleblowing Procedure set out overleaf.

Continuation Sheet.