



Gosfield School

Whistle Blowing Policy

Whole School Policy, including EYFS

WHISTLE BLOWING

The School has adopted this policy on whistle blowing 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.

ELEMENTS OF THE POLICY

In accordance with Lord Nolan's Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the School's policy on whistle blowing is intended to demonstrate that the School:

- Has a culture for raising concerns, valuing staff and of reflective practice
- Will undertake that any detriment towards an individual who raises a disclosure is not acceptable
- Make a commitment that all disclosures raised will be dealt with appropriately, consistently, fairly and professionally.
- 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 policy and 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 policy is separate from the School's adopted procedures regarding grievances. Employees should not use the whistle blowing procedure to raise grievances about their personal employment situation.

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

Malpractice is not easily defined however general examples of whistleblowing matters may include but are not limited to the following:

- a criminal offence. Further to the introduction of the Bribery Act 2010 this includes the provision of or accepting of bribes in order to gain to improve the prospects of gaining business, failing to prevent bribery or bribing a foreign official;
- fraud;

- financial mismanagement or corruption;
- health and safety issues in the workplace that puts the safety of workers or visitors at risk;
- a failure to comply with a legal obligation or breaches of legislation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- risks of damage to the environment;
- deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above.

The legislation covers internal disclosures to the employer and disclosures to prescribed regulatory bodies such as HMRC, the Financial Conduct Authority, the Health and Safety Executive, the Information Commissioner and Pensions Regulator.

Whistleblowing is vital for maintaining high standards of care and ensuring a safe environment for children. It allows for prompt action to be taken if practices fall short of expected standards, protecting children from potential harm. In Early Years settings, whistleblowing involves staff reporting concerns about poor or unsafe practices to protect children.

The following outlines the process:

- **Initial Reporting:**

Generally, whistleblowing concerns within a school should be reported to the Principal. This allows them to address the issue internally and take appropriate action. If the complaint is against the Principal, it should then be reported to the Chair of Governors. If the concern involves the Chair of Governors, or if the initial investigation is not satisfactory, the report can be escalated to the local authority, the Department for Education.

- **Confidentiality:**

School whistleblowing policies typically emphasize confidentiality, aiming to protect the identity of the whistleblower. However, there may be situations where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, particularly in cases involving child protection or serious misconduct. Whistleblowers are legally protected from retaliation or victimization for raising genuine concerns in the public interest.

Once a disclosure has been made the School will hold a meeting with the whistleblower to gather all the information needed to understand the situation. In some cases, a suitable conclusion may be reached through an initial conversation with a manager. In more serious cases there may be a need for a formal investigation. This may be conducted by a lone manager or member of SLT, or the DSL is related to child protection issues, the Principal and the Chair of Governors will be informed if it is an allegation against them further advice from the LAFO will be sought.

It is important to note that if an investigation concludes that the disclosure was untrue it does not automatically mean that it was raised maliciously by a worker. When dealing with disclosures, whether anonymous or in person the School will treat all disclosures made seriously and consistently and:

- Provide support to the worker during what can be a difficult or anxious time with access to mentoring, advice and counselling
- Reassure the whistleblower that their disclosure will not affect their position at work
- Document whether the whistleblower has requested confidentiality
- Manage the expectations of the whistleblower in terms of what action and/or feedback they can expect as well clear timescales for providing updates

- Produce a summary of the meeting for record keeping purposes and provide a copy to the whistleblower
- Allow the worker to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague at any meeting about the disclosure, if they wish to do so
- Provide support services after a disclosure has been made such as mediation and dispute resolution; to help rebuild trust and relationships in the workplace It will be useful to document any decisions or action taken following the making of a disclosure by a worker.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Employees who wish to raise a concern under this policy are entitled to have the matter treated confidentially and their name will not be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator of malpractice without their prior approval. It may be appropriate to preserve confidentiality that concerns are raised orally rather than in writing, although members of staff are encouraged to express their concern in writing wherever possible. If there is evidence of criminal activity then the Police will in all cases be informed.

THE INVESTIGATION

A member of staff will be at liberty to express their concern to their line manager. If this is not appropriate then they should contact the Principal, Vice Principal or Head of Prep and Nursery. Should the allegation be of a safeguarding nature, this concern should be raised directly with the Principal.

Any concern raised will be investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. The member of staff making the allegation needs to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, we will inform those making allegations of the resolution of any investigation.

A member of staff who is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with will have a right to raise it in confidence with the Governors.

EXTERNAL PROCEDURES

Where all internal procedures have been exhausted, a member of staff shall have a right of access to an independent external organisation such as the Independent Schools Inspectorate. The independent external body should be appropriate to the nature of the concern. Alternatively staff can access: NSPCC whistleblowing advice line is available. Staff can call 0800 0280285 – 08:00 to 20:00, Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 18:00 at weekends. The email address is: help@nspcc.org.uk. Alternatively, staff can write to: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH. General guidance on whistleblowing can be found via: Whistleblowing for employees.

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 employee reasonably believes:

- It is justified by exceptionally serious circumstances.
- The School would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence.
- They would be victimised by the School.
- The Secretary of State has ordered it.

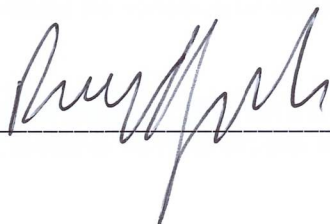
MALICIOUS ACCUSATIONS

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

PROTECTION FROM REPRISAL OR VICTIMISATION

No member of the 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 whistle blower procedures.

Signed: _____
Principal



Date: _____

4/9/25

Date of next review: September 2027