



Willow International Academy

Whistle-blowing Policy

The School has adopted this policy and the accompanying procedures 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, failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour, bullying or unethical conduct within the School environment. The policy also provides if necessary, for such concerns to be raised outside the organisation.

Aims of Policy

- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected.
- To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

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 whistleblowing is intended to demonstrate that the School:

- 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, fictitious 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 procedures regarding grievances. You should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise grievances about your personal employment situation.

This procedure is to enable you 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 ethics, bullying, 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.

All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns. If staff and volunteers feel unable to raise a child-protection issue with the School or feel that their genuine concerns regarding any child protection issues which may include the attitude or actions of colleagues are not being addressed, they may use other whistleblowing channels.

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is also available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and Email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Anonymous referrals

Referrals should be made in accordance with this policy and to the relevant member of staff or governor. Sufficient specific detail of the malpractice should be provided to enable an investigation to take place. The person making the referral should be clearly identified so that follow up requests for clarification or evidence can be dealt with. The school will not investigate anonymous referrals unless they are sufficiently detailed and specific to allow for immediate investigation without reference to the referer.

The purpose of the policy is to allow for the proper investigation of suspected wrongdoing and to reassure those working in the school and using its services that proper systems of management are in place. That feedback cannot be provided if referrals are made anonymously. Given the School's sincere commitment to act fairly on receipt of concerns, it is the responsibility of those raising concerns to be clear about who is raising them and why they are being raised and to provide as much information as possible to ensure an effective investigation.

Staff can add safeguarding concerns relating to a member of staff via MyConcern if they prefer. No pupil name should be entered (leave blank) and the notification group should be "Whistleblowing" - this is then only shared with the head of school, head of secondary and head of primary.

Confidentiality

If you wish to raise a concern under this procedure you are entitled to have the matter treated confidentially and your name will not usually be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator of malpractice without your prior knowledge. It may be appropriate to preserve confidentiality that concerns are raised orally rather than in writing, although you are encouraged to express your concern in writing wherever possible.

In most cases an investigation will require that the detail of the allegations are disclosed to the alleged perpetrator so that all the facts can be discovered. Where the subject matter requires investigation by an outside agency e.g. Police, Social Services or the Health and Safety Executive, then the school will be bound to comply with the requirements of the investigating body as to how the investigation is conducted.

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

The Investigation

Initially a concern should be raised with Head of Phase, however, where the matter is more serious or you feel that your concern has not been addressed, you should contact one of the following:

The Headteacher, Deputy Head, Head of Primary or Secondary or School Admin Manager,

Any concern raised will be investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. When making an allegation you will be kept informed of progress and, whenever possible and subject to third party rights, will be informed of the outcome.

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 Governing Body.

External Procedures

Where all internal procedures have been exhausted, you shall have the 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) or Spanish national equivalents.

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 you reasonably believe :

- 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, fictitious or frivolous accusations will be dealt with under the School's Disciplinary Procedure.

Protection from Reprisal or Victimisation

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 Whistle-blower procedures.

Next Review September 2021