



## **WOBURN LOWER SCHOOL**

### **WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY**

#### **RATIONALE**

Woburn Lower School is committed to having the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. This policy is designed to ensure that staff and visitors to the school understand when and how to raise a concern that can be classified as whistleblowing and to understand that it is their responsibility to do so.

All disclosures made under this procedure will be treated sensitively, consistently and fairly.

#### **AIMS**

This policy aims to:

- Encourage all staff/visitors to the school to feel confident in raising serious concerns
- Provide guidance on how to raise concerns
- Ensure that concerns are responded to promptly and that the whistle-blower knows how to pursue their concern if they are not satisfied with how it has been dealt with.
- Reassure staff/visitors that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they raise a concern

#### **DEFINITION OF WHISTLE-BLOWING**

Whistle-blowing means reporting types of wrongdoing or misconduct that are believed to be against the public interest. This means that the behaviour must affect others, for example, pupils, other members of staff or the general public.

The Confidential Reporting Code is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other policies and procedures. Concerns or complaints that employees wish to raise formally, with regard to their own employment, should usually be made using the school's Grievance Policy unless the employee believes that the concern is in the public interest. If the person to whom the concern has been reported considers that the concern should more properly be dealt with under the provisions of another policy, the whistle-blower will be referred to that policy.

The major whistle-blowing concerns that fall outside other policies and procedures are called 'qualifying disclosures'. The concern could be about something that happened in the past, is currently happening or likely to happen in the future.

Whistleblowing concerns must relate to or show one of the following:

- Conduct which is an offence or a breach of the law
- A possible miscarriage of justice
- A Health and Safety risk
- Damaging the environment
- Misuse of public money
- Possible fraud and corruption, including bribery
- Sexual or physical abuse of pupils or others
- Deliberate concealment of any of these matters
- Any other unethical or improper conduct

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 encourages individuals to raise concerns about malpractice in the workplace. All staff/visitors have a responsibility to report any concerns relating to the above that they may have.

### **LEGAL PROTECTION FOR WHISTLE-BLOWERS**

Whistle-blowers are protected by law from being treated unfairly or losing their jobs through raising their concern. Woburn Lower School's Governing Body will provide all reasonable protection for those who raise concerns made in the public interest.

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that appropriate personal support is offered to the member of staff/visitor who has raised the concern and to any member of staff against whom allegations have been made.

### **RAISING THE CONCERN**

The whistleblowing flow chart gives clear guidance on who to report your concerns to. This is clearly displayed in the School's staff room.

Concerns can be raised anonymously, but the person receiving the allegation may not be able to take it further if they have not been provided with all the information that they need. Also, the whistle-blower will not be able to receive any feedback about the concern that they have raised.

Whistle-blowers can give their name, but request confidentiality, and in these circumstances every effort will be made to protect their identity.

However, in some circumstances, information may need to be passed on to those with a legitimate need to have this information and it may be necessary for you to provide a written statement and act as a witness in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings or police enquiry.

You can invite a trade union representative or a colleague to attend meetings with you.

Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing. If you raise the concern verbally, written notes will be taken by the person you have raised the concern with.

The following information will be useful:

- The background and history of the complaint (giving relevant dates)
- The reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation
- As much information is known at the time of the disclosure

Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of your concerns, you will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient evidence or other reasonable grounds to raise them.

### **WHEN THE CONCERN HAS BEEN RAISED**

The person with whom you have raised your concern may ask you for further information. They will then write to you within 10 days to let you know how your concern will be dealt with.

The information you can expect to receive is:

- An acknowledgment that the concern has been received
- An indication of how the concern will be dealt with
- An estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Whether any initial enquiries have been made
- Whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not
- Information about support available to you

The person with whom you have raised your concern will notify the school's HR Adviser that a whistleblowing allegation has been made.

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate. An investigation may be carried out, depending on the nature of the allegations and the evidence/information presented.

Where an investigation is necessary, it may take the form of one or more of the following:

- An internal investigation by the Headteacher or a Governor, which may take the form of a disciplinary investigation
- A referral to the Police
- A referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer

You will be informed of the outcome of any investigation, in writing, and/or of any action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law.

If you do not feel that your concern has been adequately addressed you may raise it with an independent body, for example:

- Your Trade Union
- The Citizen's Advice Bureau
- A relevant professional body or regulatory organisation
- A relevant voluntary organisation
- The Police
- The Local Government Ombudsman
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission

Where it is established, after investigation, that the allegations are unproven, the whistle-blower will be notified. The school will deem the matter 'closed' and will not expect the issue to be raised again unless new evidence becomes available.

If you make an allegation which you believe to be in the public interest, but it is not confirmed by the subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Headteacher and the Governing Body to ensure that it remains compliant and meets the needs of the school.

**Related policies:**

Safeguarding

E-Safety

Staff Code of Conduct

Disciplinary Procedures

Acceptable use

Data Protection

Governor Code of Conduct

Governor Statement of behaviour

Governor:

Date:

Headteacher:

Date: March 2024

Review Date: March 2025