

1.6.9 WHISTLEBLOWING

Policy

- The School is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability for all of its staff and students.
- In line with this commitment, the school encourages anyone with serious concerns about any aspect of the school's activities to come forward and voice those concerns.
- This applies equally to concerns about the activities of students, staff and anyone else in their dealings with the school.

The procedures associated with this policy:

- Provide the basis on which individuals can raise any such concerns they may have, and receive feedback on action taken
- Allows individuals to take any matter raised further if they are dissatisfied with the School's response
- Gives protection from reprisals or victimisation for 'whistleblowing' in good faith
- This policy applies to all members of the School community

Procedures

There are existing procedures in place to enable students, staff and parents to make complaints about individual and particular matters. (See Complaints Procedure).

These procedures are intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of individual complaints.

The concern may be about something that:

- is unlawful;
- is against the policies of the School;
- amounts to improper conduct;
- seems likely to harm somebody or the environment;
- represents a cover-up of these sorts of issues.

Safeguards:

Harassment or victimisation

- The School recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisals from those responsible for the

malpractice. The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take all possible measures to protect individuals who raise concerns in good faith.

Confidentiality

- The School will protect the identity of individuals who raise concerns and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated, however, that the investigation may reveal the source of the information, and statements made by the individuals who raised the issue may be required as part of the evidence. The School encourages individuals to put their name to allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously will be considered at the discretion of the School. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken account of will include:
 - ~ the seriousness of the issue raised;
 - ~ the credibility of the concern;
 - ~ the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Untrue allegations

- If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the individual. However, if individuals make allegations that are malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action is likely.

How to raise a concern

- The sooner individuals express their concern, the easier it is to take action.
- As a first step:
 - a pupil should normally raise concerns with their form Tutor, Class Teacher or with the Deputy Head; in some situations it could be raised with the Head depending on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice. Students who feel that they cannot approach management in the school should approach the school's Independent Listener.
 - an employee should normally raise concerns with the Deputy Head or the Bursar as appropriate; if these relate to the Deputy Head or Bursar then they should be raised directly with the Head. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice. Employees who feel that they cannot approach management in the school should approach the Chair of Governors.
- Concerns can be raised verbally but are better raised in writing:
 - This should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the employee is concerned about the situation.

How will the school respond?

- The action taken by the School will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may for example:
 - be investigated internally;
 - be referred to external agencies.

The Head or appropriate member of School staff will aim to respond in writing to the individual who raised the issue within 10 working days of a concern being received.

When any meeting is arranged with the individual, they will be given the right to be accompanied by a friend or fellow worker who is not involved in the incident to which the concern relates.

The School accepts that individuals need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Therefore, subject to any legal or contractual constraints and the necessary timespan to investigate the issue thoroughly, individuals will receive information about the outcomes of any investigations.

Taking the issue further

- This policy is intended to provide individuals with an avenue to raise relevant concerns within the School. If an individual is not satisfied, and feels it is right to take the matter further, the following are possible contact points, some or all of which may be appropriate
- For students:
 - the school's Independent Listener;
 - Chair of the Board of Governors
- For employees
 - relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
 - Chair of the Board of Governors
 - the Police
 - the charity: Public Concern At Work (telephone 020 7404 6609).