



Shrewsbury School

Whistleblowing

The following policy outlines procedures that are in place in the School that enable any member of staff to raise a legitimate concern regarding possible malpractice. In line with the 'Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy' all members of staff must be mindful of their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in our care. Issues of pupil welfare must always be of paramount importance. Staff should try not to think 'What if I am wrong?' but rather 'What if I am right?' The policy aims to make explicit the School's commitment to the development of good practice and appropriate procedures

What is 'Whistleblowing'?

The term whistleblowing can be defined as raising a concern about a wrongdoing within an organisation. The School has adopted this policy and procedure on whistleblowing to enable members of staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion.

This procedure is designed to deal with disclosure of information by a member of staff which relates to some danger, bribery, corruption, fraud or other unlawful or unethical conduct in the workplace. Employment legislation governs the making of disclosures concerning workplace activities and is intended to protect members of staff who blow the whistle on bad practice from being subjected to any detriment or from being unfairly dismissed as a result. This procedure is available to all members of staff who discover something they feel that they should pass on in the interests of the public. All types of wrongdoing are included whether they are acts committed by fellow members of staff, faults in school procedures or oversights which should be rectified. The procedure should be used even in the event that the act or omission causing concern has finished or has not yet started.

Training is provided on whistleblowing as part of the Safeguarding and Child Protection training regularly provided by the School. Periodic (at least annually) reminders of good practice are given to staff as well as updates when any changes occur. This may be in an email or payroll letter, or as part of a staff meeting or training session.

Elements of the policy

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; and
- Will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all members of staff.

In this policy, "staff" covers all employees, officers, governors, consultants, contractors, volunteers, work placement students, casual workers and agency workers.

Safeguarding

Nothing within this policy is intended to prevent staff from complying with their statutory obligations in accordance with *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (DfE, September 2018). In particular:

- **Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy:** A member of staff should raise any initial safeguarding concerns about a child with the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- **Safeguarding - member of staff:** A member of staff should raise any concerns about another staff member with the Head, or if the concern is about the Head, with the Chair of Trustees (without first notifying the Head) in accordance with the procedures in Appendix 4 of the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- **Whistleblowing Policy:** A member of staff should follow this procedure to raise concerns about poor or unsafe safeguarding practices at the School or potential failures by the School or staff to properly safeguard the welfare of pupils if the member of staff is concerned that the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are not being followed correctly.
- **Children's Social Care:** In exceptional circumstances, or if at any point there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child, a referral should be made to Children's Social Care immediately. Anyone can make a referral.

Procedure

This procedure is separate from the School's procedures regarding grievances. Individuals should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise grievances about their personal circumstances in the workplace. The Grievance Procedure [available on the school intranet (firefly) or from HR] should be used in such cases. This procedure is to enable members of staff to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the School.

Confidentiality

Members of staff who wish to raise a concern under this procedure are entitled to have the matter treated confidentially insofar as possible. The School will make every effort to keep the member of staff's identity confidential. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know the member of staff's identity, this will be discussed with the member of staff in advance.

Members of staff are encouraged to express their concern in writing wherever possible. The School does not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if the School cannot obtain further information from the member of staff. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Members of staff who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should make this known when raising their concerns.

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

Process

Stage one

The member of staff should disclose the suspected wrongdoing first to the Head of HR. In the event that the Head of HR is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, the member of staff shall be entitled to proceed directly to Stage Two of this procedure.

The School has a duty to follow up on concerns raised under the Whistleblowing Policy. The School will make initial enquiries (usually involving a meeting with the whistle-blower), to decide whether an investigation is required and what form it should take. For example, the matter raised may:

- be resolved simply without the need for further investigation;
- be investigated internally by an appropriate manager, e.g. the Bursar;
- be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer for advice;
- be referred to the Police;
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

The member of staff can expect a response detailing any action taken within seven working days of the Head of HR becoming aware of the disclosure.

Stage two

If no response is forthcoming after seven days or if the Head of HR is involved in the suspected wrongdoing the member of staff shall be entitled to notify the Head / Bursar, as appropriate.

The member of staff can expect a response detailing any action taken within seven days of the Head / Bursar becoming aware of the disclosure.

Stage three

If no such response is forthcoming the member of staff should inform the Chair of Trustees of the disclosure.

External Procedures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. The law recognises, as does the school, that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to report their concerns to a relevant outside body including:

- the Local Authority Designated Officer;
- Children's Social Care;
- the NSPCC;
- the Health and Safety Executive;
- the Environment Agency;
- the Information Commissioner;
- the Department for Education (**DfE**);
- the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy;
- the Police;
- the Charity Commission;
- the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI); or
- the Channel Police Practitioner.

Staff are strongly encouraged to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. In most cases staff should not find it necessary to alert anyone external but before doing so, as well as considering the internal help and support available which is identified above, please seek external advice from:

- **Public Concern at Work:** If staff have any concerns about disclosing a suspected wrongdoing the independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. Staff can call 020 7404 6609 for advice.
- **NSPCC:** The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 (8.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday) or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

The member of staff should under no circumstances approach a commercial body or the media with details of the suspected wrongdoing. If the member of staff approaches any such body and / or where their concern is disclosed in a malicious manner or for personal gain, this may make the disclosure unreasonable and the protection given to you by this procedure may be lost. Additionally, the School may consider this to be gross misconduct and immediate disciplinary action may be taken against the member of staff.

Protection from Reprisal or Victimisation

Provided that this procedure is used appropriately and correctly, a member of staff will not suffer any detriment as a result of reporting a suspected wrongdoing. A failure to follow this procedure may however make the disclosure unreasonable and the protection given to the member of staff by this procedure may be lost.

If any member of staff has any queries about this procedure, please should contact the Head / Bursar.

Further advice and support

It is recognised that whistleblowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from the Deputy Head and/or your professional body or trade union. You can also seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead at school, Public Concern at Work or the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline.

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