



Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

POLICY TITLE: Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

STATUS: Statutory

REVIEWED BY: Governing Board

DATE REVIEWED: January 2021

NEXT REVIEW: January 2024

1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

1.1. Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School (the Academy) prides itself on having an open and honest culture and is committed to the highest possible standards of probity and accountability. We encourage all staff to come forward and raise any serious concerns so that the Academy can investigate.

1.2. The aims of this Policy are:

- i. 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.
- ii. To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.
- iii. To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of harassment or victimisation, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

1.3. This Procedure applies to all employees, agency, casual and supply workers, volunteers and consultants throughout their period of employment or engagement with the Academy.

1.4. This Policy is non- contractual and may be amended at any time.

1.5. The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for implementing and reviewing this Policy. They will also ensure all staff are made aware of this Policy, and offer appropriate training when required.

2. WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?

2.1. Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include (but is not limited to):

- i. criminal activity;
- ii. failure to comply with any legal or professional obligations ;
- iii. danger to health and safety;
- iv. damage to the environment;
- v. bribery
- vi. breach of any internal policies and procedures
- vii. any improper conduct, or conduct that falls below the expected standards of the Academy
- viii. the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

2.2. This Policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work, your salary or any salary review process. In those cases you should use the Grievance Procedure or Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy as appropriate.

3. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

3.1. We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with the Head Teacher. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer however, concerns are better raised in writing.

3.2. If your concern is about the Headteacher, then you should raise the matter with the Chair of the Governing Board.

3.3. When raising your concerns, you should provide as much information as possible. This includes the background to the issue, any applicable dates and the reasons for your concerns.

3.4. You are not expected to prove your concerns, but you will need to demonstrate if it is about the Headteacher or the Chair of the Governing Board that there are sufficient grounds for raising the issue.

3.5. We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern and normally within 10 working days. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this Policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

3.6. We will take down a written summary of your concern and provide you with a copy after the meeting. We will also aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

4.1. We hope that staff will feel able to voice concerns openly under this Policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for

anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.

- 4.2. We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. If you are concerned about possible reprisals if your identity is revealed then you should notify the Headteacher or the Chair of the Governing Board if it is about the Headteacher and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve your confidentiality.

5. INVESTIGATION AND OUTCOME

- 5.1. Once you have raised a concern, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.
- 5.2. In some cases we may appoint an external person to investigate your concerns. We will confirm this once we have carried out an initial assessment of the situation.
- 5.3. We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and set out how long it might take to complete. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.
- 5.4. We aim to communicate the outcome of the investigation to you within 10 working days of our investigation concluding.
- 5.5. If we conclude that you have made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, you will be subject to disciplinary action. However, if your concerns were raised in good faith, then regardless of the outcome of the investigation, no disciplinary action will be taken against you in relation to your concerns.

6. IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED AND EXTERNAL DISCLOSURES

- 6.1. If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with the board of Trustees. You should do so within 10 working days of being notified of the outcome of our investigation.
- 6.2. If you remain concerned following your notification to the board of Trustees, or if your whistleblowing relates to a Governor, then you may wish to raise the matter externally to any of the following:
 - i. Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblower charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are available online at <http://www.pcaaw.org.uk/>;
 - ii. Your trade union (if applicable);
 - iii. The Department for Education;
 - iv. The Academy's external auditors
 - v. Relevant professional bodies;
 - vi. The Police; or
 - vii. An independent legal representative.

- 6.3. However, the aim of this Policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and

remedying any wrongdoing in the Academy. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

- 6.4. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. You can obtain this advice from Public Concern at Work or an independent legal advisor.

7. PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

- 7.1. It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this Policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 7.2. Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Board if it is about the Headteacher immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.
- 7.3. However, raising a concern under this Policy will not necessarily stop any processes ongoing under other Academy policies including the Grievance or Conduct policies.
- 7.4. You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action.