



Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

POLICY TITLE: Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

STATUS: Statutory

REVIEWED BY: Governing Board

DATE REVIEWED: February 2025

NEXT REVIEW: February 2026

1 ABOUT THIS POLICY

- 1.1 Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School (the **Academy**) is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with the Code of Conduct. All organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur.
- 1.2 The aims of this Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure (the **Policy**) are to:
 - 1.2.1 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;
 - 1.2.2 provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns; and
 - 1.2.3 reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 1.3 This Policy applies to all employees, officers, governors, contractors, agency workers, casual workers, work placement students, volunteers and consultants.
- 1.4 This Policy is non-contractual and may be amended at any time.
- 1.5 The Headteacher has overall responsibility for implementing and reviewing this Policy. The Headteacher will also ensure all staff are made aware of this Policy, and offer appropriate training when required.
- 1.6 If you have any queries about this Policy, you should contact the Headteacher.
- 1.7 The Academy will periodically appoint one Trustee as Whistleblowing Trustee, currently Stuart Cotten, and one member of staff as Whistleblowing Officer, currently the Deputy Headteacher.

2 WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?

1.8 Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include :

- 1.8.1 criminal activity;
- 1.8.2 safeguarding concerns (see paragraph 3.1 below);
- 1.8.3 failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- 1.8.4 miscarriages of justice;
- 1.8.5 danger to health and safety;
- 1.8.6 damage to the environment;
- 1.8.7 bribery;
- 1.8.8 financial fraud or mismanagement;
- 1.8.9 other unlawful or unethical conduct in the workplace;
- 1.8.10 the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

1.9 A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities and such disclosure is in the public interest (a **whistleblowing concern**) you should report it under this Policy.

1.10 This Policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances in the workplace. In those cases you should use the Academy's Grievance Policy and Procedure.

1.11 Provided that this Policy is used appropriately and correctly, you will not suffer any detriment as a result of reporting a suspected wrongdoing.

1.12 If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this Policy you should seek advice from the Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Protect, the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline or the Modern Slavery helpline.

3 SAFEGUARDING

1.13 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 2024). In particular:

- 1.13.1 If you have any concerns about a pupil's welfare, action should be taken immediately. You should report the concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. See the Academy's child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures for full information about what to do if you have a concern about a pupil, including what to do if the Designated Safeguarding Lead is not available.

1.13.2 You must raise any concerns about another staff member in accordance with the Academy's child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures.

1.13.3 You should follow this Policy to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practices at the Academy or potential failures by the Academy or staff to properly fulfil its safeguarding responsibilities.

1.14 The Academy is committed to the prevention of modern slavery. If you have any queries relating to modern slavery, please contact the Headteacher. Identified instances of modern slavery should be immediately notified to the police. If you think you have identified an instance of modern slavery, or if you consider that you may be a victim of modern slavery you may contact the Modern Slavery helpline on 0800 0121 700.

1.15 All staff are trained so that they understand they are expected and encouraged to raise concerns they have, whether related to the safeguarding and welfare of pupils, the conduct of staff or other matters, during the course of their employment in accordance with this Policy. Safeguarding children is at the centre of the Academy's culture and concerns should always be raised in accordance with paragraph 3.1 above. If issues have not been identified before, safeguarding will always be considered formally during staff performance development reviews and appraisal and finally at exit interviews which are held with all leavers. Staff who raise concerns about working practices at the Academy to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or an appropriate senior member of Staff will be protected from detriment under this Policy.

4 CONFIDENTIALITY

1.16 We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing 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.

1.17 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.

5 HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

1.18 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.

1.19 Stage One:

1.19.1 You should disclose the suspected wrongdoing first to the Headteacher. In the event that the Headteacher is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, you should proceed directly to Stage Two of this Policy.

1.19.2 You can expect a response detailing to whom the disclosure has been notified or any action taken within seven days of the Headteacher becoming aware of the disclosure.

1.20 Stage Two:

1.20.1 If no response is forthcoming after seven days from the Headteacher, if you are not satisfied with the way in which your concern has been handled or if the Headteacher is involved in the suspected wrongdoing you should notify the Whistleblowing Officer, as appropriate .

1.20.2 You can expect a response detailing any action taken within seven days of the Whistleblowing Officer becoming aware of the disclosure.

1.21 Stage Three:

1.21.1 If no response is forthcoming after seven days from the Whistleblowing Officer, if you are not satisfied with the way in which your concern has been handled or if the Whistleblowing Officer is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, you should inform the Whistleblowing Trustee of the disclosure.

1.22 We may arrange a meeting with you to discuss your concern. 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.

6 INVESTIGATION AND OUTCOME

1.23 Once you have raised a concern, we may carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

1.24 In some cases, we may appoint an external person to investigate your concerns. If this is required, we will confirm this once we have carried out an initial assessment of the situation.

1.25 We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

7 RELEVANT EXTERNAL REPORTING

1.26 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 paragraph 3.1 above, that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to a relevant outside body including:

1.26.1 the local authority's Designated Officer;

1.26.2 Children's Social Care;

1.26.3 the NSPCC;

1.26.4 the Health and Safety Executive;

1.26.5 the Environment Agency;

1.26.6 the Information Commissioner;

- 1.26.7 the Department for Education, where referrals can be made at <https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe>;
 - 1.26.8 the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy;
 - 1.26.9 the Charity Commission;
 - 1.26.10 the police;
 - 1.26.11 the Boarding Schools Association;
 - 1.26.12 the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (**Ofsted**); or
 - 1.26.13 the Channel Police Practitioner.
- 1.27 Staff are strongly encouraged to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone external but before you do, as well as considering the internal help and support available which is identified above, please seek external advice from:
- 1.27.1 **Protect (formerly known as Public Concern at Work):** If you have any concerns about disclosing a suspected wrongdoing the independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline. Staff can call 020 3117 2520 for advice.
 - 1.27.2 **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 (8am - 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am - 6pm Saturday and Sunday) or email help@nspcc.org.uk.
- 1.28 You should under no circumstances approach a commercial body or the media with details of the suspected wrongdoing. If you approach any such body and / or where your concern is disclosed in a malicious manner or for personal gain, the protection given to you by this Policy may be lost. Additionally, the Academy may consider this to be gross misconduct, and disciplinary action may be taken against you.