

Last reviewed 02/09/2021

Blossom Lower School and Upper House



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Foundation stage, Primary, Secondary, Post 16

Last reviewed September 2021 Fiona Roberts (DSL)

Next review due September 2022

This policy reflects the principles in Sir Robert Francis's Freedom to Speak Up review (2015).

Introduction

Blossom House School is committed to creating a culture of safety where the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability are maintained. We value reflective practice and we encourage staff working with us to raise any concerns they may have about any aspect of our work.

It is recognised that whistleblowing may engender feelings of disloyalty to colleagues or that staff may fear harassment or victimisation; however staff should feel free to 'speak up' and will be appropriately supported and valued for doing so.

This policy applies to all staff including agency workers, supply staff, contractors working on the premises, students and volunteers.

This procedure is separate from the school complaints procedure and other statutory reporting procedures.

Don't think "what if I'm wrong"– think "what if I'm right."

Blossom House School Culture of Vigilance

Blossom House School promotes a culture of vigilance and staff must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of the Principal Joanna Burgess. This procedure encourages staff to raise serious concerns, including poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's safeguarding regime; without fear of reprisal or victimisation, internally within school rather than overlooking a problem or raising the matter outside.

Reasons for whistleblowing

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour:-
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risks to others.
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself.

What stops people from whistleblowing?

- Fears of starting a chain of events which spirals.
- Fear of disrupting the work or project.
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers.
- Fear of not being believed.

Staff behaviours that should cause concern:-

- conduct which is, has been or is likely to be an offence or breach of law
- conduct that has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur as the result of which the school fails to comply with a legal obligation. For example, unauthorised use of public funds, possible fraud and corruption, or other unethical conduct discrimination of any kind and waste/frivolous expenditure
- past, current or likely miscarriages of justice
- past, current or likely health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- past, current or likely damage to the environment
- inappropriate discussions which may offend or harm others, undermine fundamental British values, express any prejudicial views, or attempt to influence or impose their personal values, attitudes or beliefs on pupils or staff
- bullying or any other oppressive behaviours
- ***where an allegation or concern is raised against a member of staff which relates to the safeguarding or welfare of a child or children, please follow safeguarding procedures on page 4 of this policy***

Other areas of concern:-

- poor or unsafe practice
- inaction following safeguarding reports
- repeat or escalating concerns which are not being addressed appropriately

How to raise a concern

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can with your line manager.
- The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why.
- If your concern is about your immediate line manager approach the Principal
- If your concern is about the Principal, or you feel you need to take it to someone outside the School, contact the school's independent body which is set up to assist if needed in such a situation (*details are held in the staff office*).
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest.
- Ideally you should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history giving names, dates and places where you can.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.

What happens next?

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- Your employer has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation.
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

Confidentiality

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if this is your wish. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if you are required to come forward as a witness.

Anonymous Allegations

Whenever possible you should put your name to your allegation, as concerns that are expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those that are attributed to a named individual.

However anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at the school's discretion.

In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation from attributable sources.

Self reporting

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff members have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their Line Manager and/or HR so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

Allegations or Concerns Raised Against Staff (including Supply Teachers, Agency Staff, Volunteers and Contractors)

Any concerns or allegations raised against a member of staff which relates to the safeguarding or welfare of a child or children, must be **reported to the Principal immediately** *[as the Principal is also the sole proprietor of Blossom House Independent School, any allegation or concerns made about the Principal should be reported directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) [020 8545 3179](tel:02085453179); [lodo@merton.gov.uk](mailto:lado@merton.gov.uk)].*

The Principal has to decide whether the concern is an allegation or low-level concern. The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold for referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Allegations that may meet the harms threshold

Allegations that indicate a person would pose a risk of harm if they continue to work in close contact with children include those who have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates that they may not be suitable to work with children (including outside the school setting)

If a child has been harmed, is at immediate risk of harm, or if the situation is an emergency, children's social care and/or the police may need to be contacted immediately.

Before contacting the LADO, the Principal will conduct basic enquiries in line with local procedures to establish the facts to help them determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation, being careful not to jeopardise any future police investigation. The LADO's role is not to investigate the allegation, but to ensure that an appropriate investigation is carried out, whether that is by the police, children's social care, the school, or a combination of these.

For more information, please see [Part four of Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2021\)](#).

Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold (low level concerns)

Concerns may be graded low level if the concern does not meet the criteria for an allegation; and the person has acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work. Example behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children;
- having favourites;
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone;
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

If the concern has been raised via a third party, the Principal should collect as much evidence as possible by speaking:

- directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously;
- to the individual involved and any witnesses.

Reports about supply staff and contractors should be notified to their employers, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

Staff are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer, where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on

reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards.

All low-level concerns are recorded in writing, including:

- name of individual sharing their concerns (unless they wish to remain anonymous)
- details of the concern
- context in which the concern arose
- action taken

Records are kept confidential in a restricted office, and are reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified and managed accordingly. If a concerning pattern of behaviour is identified which meets the criteria for an allegation, then the matter should be referred to the LADO. The records' review might identify that there are wider cultural issues within the school or college that enabled the behaviour to occur. This might mean that policies or processes could be revised or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

The school has a Safeguarding Lead Member on the Advisory Body, who may be contacted for any minor concerns around the Proprietor or Senior Management Team. Please contact via the Office.

Referring to DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) and TRA (Teaching Regulation Agency)

Blossom House School is aware of their obligation to refer any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) to DBS if:

- They are dismissed because they have harmed someone;
- They are dismissed/removed from working in regulated activity because they might have harmed someone;
- They were going to be dismissed for either of these reasons, but they resigned first.

Allegations of serious misconduct against a teacher may be referred to the TRA.

Whistleblowing advice line

If you have concerns over how child protection issues are being handled in your own or another organisation, you can call the NSPCC advice line anonymously on 0800 028 0285, or email help@nspcc.org.uk. More information can be found on the [NSPCC website](#).

Signed:



Joanna Burgess
Principal
02.09.21