



The Study Prep WIMBLEDON

The Study Preparatory School Whistleblowing Policy

The Study Preparatory School (“the School”) has adopted this policy and the accompanying procedure on whistleblowing to enable members of staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, a failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour or unethical conduct. The policy also provides, if necessary, for such concerns to be raised outside the School.

Elements of the Policy

The School is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity, and expects all staff to maintain high standards. However, 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. The School’s policy on whistleblowing is intended to demonstrate that the School:-

- will not tolerate malpractice;
- encourages staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, as appropriate;
- 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;
- will invoke the School’s disciplinary policy and procedure in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations; The policy seeks to reassure staff that they can raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisal, even if they turn out to be mistaken; and
- will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all members of staff.

Procedure

It is separate from the School’s adopted procedures regarding grievances. Individuals should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise grievances about their personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases, the School’s Grievance Procedure or Anti-Bullying Policy should be used, as appropriate. If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this procedure you should seek advice from the Head or the Bursar.

This procedure is to enable members of staff to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the School.

Malpractice is not easily defined; however, it includes allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to the staff code of ethics, bringing the school into disrepute, criminal activities, or failing to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice, or creating or ignoring a serious risk to health, safety or the environment (negligence).

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to suspected malpractice within the School affecting any of the School's activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this procedure.

If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected malpractice affecting any of the School's activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this procedure. Malpractice is not easily defined; however, it includes allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to the Staff Code of Conduct, criminal activities, or failing to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice, or creating or ignoring a serious risk to health, safety or the environment. It includes potential failures in the School's safeguarding regime.

Should staff and volunteers feel unable to raise an issue with the School or feel that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they may use other whistleblowing channels, such as:

- Protect (an independent whistleblowing charity, previously known as Public Concern at Work) (helpline: (020) 3117 2502, email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk, website: www.pcaw.co.uk).
- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline (tel: 0800 028 0285 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk).

Confidentiality

The School hopes that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this procedure. If an individual wishes to raise a concern confidentially, the School will make every effort to keep his/her identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know the identity of the individual raising the concern, this will be discussed with the individual raising the concern.

If there is evidence of criminal activity, the Police will be informed.

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 person raising the concern. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should discuss this with the Head or Bursar and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If a person raising a concern is in any doubt s/he can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are set out above.

Raising a whistleblowing concern

All members of staff are at liberty to express their concern to the Head, Deputy Head or the Bursar. If the person expressing the concern feels unable to approach the Head, Deputy Head or Bursar directly, then the Chair of Governors should be the first point of contact.

A meeting will be arranged as soon as possible to discuss the concern raised. The staff member may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this procedure. Any companion will be required to respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation. The staff member may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information as the concerns raised are investigated.

Any concern raised will be investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. The staff member will be kept informed of progress and, whenever possible and subject to third party rights, informed of the resolution. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent the School providing specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The staff member will be required to treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

If a staff member is not satisfied that his/her concern is being properly dealt with, he/she will have a right to raise it in confidence with the School Governors. Alternatively, you can follow the external procedure below.

External Procedures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in school. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

However, where all internal procedures have been exhausted, a member of staff shall have a right of access to an independent external person/body. This may include (depending on the subject matter of the disclosure) HMRC, the Audit Commission, the Health and Safety Executive and/or the Local Authority Designated Officer (where the disclosure relates to a child protection issue).

It should be noted that under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where a member of staff may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where the individual reasonably believes :-

- that exceptionally serious circumstances justify it;
- that the School would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence;
- where they believe they would be victimised by the School;
- where the Secretary of State has ordered it.
- the Secretary of State has ordered it.

Staff are strongly encouraged to seek advice before reporting a concern externally. The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline should you wish to seek external advice (please see above).

Malicious Accusations

False, malicious, vexatious or frivolous accusations will be dealt with under the School's Disciplinary Procedure.

Protection from Reprisal or Victimisation

It is understandable that whistle blowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. The School aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken

No member of the staff will suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern under this Whistleblowing Policy. If a member of staff believes that they have suffered such treatment, they should inform the Head or Bursar immediately. If the matter is not remedied, the member of staff should raise it formally using the Grievance Procedure.

Staff must not threaten or retaliate against a whistleblower in any way. If a member of staff is involved in such conduct, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

Reviewed: February 2022