



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Committee:	Governing Body
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Required to publish on website?	Yes
Statutory:	Yes

1. Context

- 1.1 In this policy, the term “whistleblowing” means the confidential raising of problems or concerns within The St Marylebone Church of England Bridge School (“the School”) by a member of staff. The proper name for whistleblowing is “protected disclosure”.
- 1.2 We all from time to time have concerns about what is happening at work. Usually these concerns are easily resolved, but in some cases it is important to have a framework in place which allows concerns to be raised confidentially and in the knowledge that a thorough and appropriate investigation will be held to bring about a satisfactory conclusion. This policy is written and implemented in line with the School’s Church of England ethos.
- 1.3 The School is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with full confidence that the matter will be appropriately considered and resolved.
- 1.4 The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides the supporting legislation for this policy and is “an Act to protect individuals who make certain disclosures in the public interest to allow such individuals to bring action in respect of victimisation; and for connected purposes”.
- 1.5 A “qualifying disclosure” means any disclosure of information that, in the reasonable belief of the worker, is made in the public interest.
- 1.6 This policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the School in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

2. Appropriate circumstances for whistleblowing

- 2.1 Whistleblowing covers concerns made which report wrong-doing that could be “in the public interest”. Examples of whistleblowing include (but are not limited to):
- serious breaches of school procedures
 - actions contrary to the school ethos
 - abuse of position
 - inappropriate behaviour with pupils
 - manipulation of accounting records and finances
 - inappropriate use of school assets or funds
 - decision-making for personal gain
 - fraud and deceit
 - any criminal activity
 - failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- 2.2 Some of these actions / behaviours could also be addressed under the School’s Safeguarding Policy and / or Allegations Procedures and might indeed be addressed under these other routes in the first instance. In these circumstances, whistle-blowing would happen where it was felt that concerns were not being addressed or followed up adequately / effectively.
- 2.3 From 25 June 2013, a consequence of the new “public interest” requirement is that employees are generally precluded from being able to “blow the whistle” about breaches of their own employment contract. Such matters would be dealt with under the School’s Grievance Procedures.

3. How to raise a concern

- 3.1 The School encourages you to raise your concern internally and should be made in writing wherever possible to, the Deputy Head of School or the Head of School. You should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. When raising a concern, you should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

4. Investigating the concern

- 4.1 The individual in receipt of the information or allegation will then carry out a preliminary investigation, or will delegate this to an appropriate person, seeking to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can be resolved internally. This initial assessment may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance.
- 4.2 The person carrying out the investigation will:

- meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time period. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative
- get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting and record the information. If it becomes apparent that the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure
- reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken (see section 6 of this policy)
- establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is,
 - then the person investigating should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the Head of School if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In other cases, they may need to report the matter to the police
 - the person who raised the concern should be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe in which they will be informed of the next steps.

4.3 Wherever possible, the School will seek to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistleblower and will, as far as possible protect them from any reprisals. Individuals are encouraged to come forward with genuine concerns in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously.

5. Outcome of the investigation

- 5.1 Once the investigation – whether this was just the preliminary investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified, and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the Local Authority or police.
- 5.2 They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.
- 5.3 Beyond the immediate actions, the Head of School, governors and other staff, if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing. While we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.
- 5.4 If the person who raised the concern is not satisfied with the response and proposed action, is unhappy with the conduct of the investigation, or considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the School, they should contact the Chair of Governors, via the Clerk (clerk@stmarylebonebridgeschool.com)