

Habs

HABERDASHERS'
ELSTREE SCHOOLS

Whistleblowing Policy

Policy Type	Statutory
Statutory	Employment Rights Act 1996
Approval Committee	BSC/GSC
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1 Related Information

1.1 Statutory Guidance

This statutory policy has been reviewed in accordance with the following guidance:

Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998)

1.2 Supporting Documents

The following related information is referred to in this policy:

Staff Employment Manual

1.3 Terminology

Head, where not explicitly defined, means either the Head of the Girls' School or the Head of the Boys' School.

Parents includes one or both parents, a legal guardian, or education guardian.

School means Haberdashers' Aske's Elstree Schools Limited as Trustee of Haberdashers' Aske's Charity trading as Haberdashers' Girls' School and/or Haberdashers' Boys' School, as now or in the future constituted (and any successor).

Student or **Students** means any student or students in the School at any age.

2 Introduction

Honesty and integrity. The School 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 for Staff contained within this Employment Manual. 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.

3 Aims of this Policy

The aims of this Policy are 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
- Provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns

- Reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

This policy covers all employees, officers, Governors, consultants, contractors, volunteers, work placement students, casual workers and agency workers.

4 Wrongdoing at work

4.1 Whistleblowing

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

- Criminal activity
- Safeguarding concerns
- Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements
- miscarriages of justice
- danger to health and safety
- bribery
- financial fraud or mismanagement
- other unlawful or unethical conduct in the workplace
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters

4.2 Whistleblower

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.

4.3 Grievances

This procedure should not be used where you have a complaint relating to your personal circumstances in the workplace. The Grievance Procedure contained within the Employment Manual should be used in such cases

4.4 Detriment

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

4.5 Advice

If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Head, Head of HR, Designated Safeguarding Lead, or the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline.

5 Safeguarding

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 2021¹⁰). In particular:

5.1 Policy on Safeguarding

If you have a concern 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 School's policy on Safeguarding 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.

5.2 Safeguarding – member of staff

You should raise any concerns about another staff member with the Head or if the concern is about the Head, with the Chair of Governors (without first notifying the Head) in accordance with the procedures in the School's policy on Safeguarding.

5.3 Whistleblowing Policy

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

5.4 The Modern Slavery helpline

The School is committed to the prevention of Modern Slavery. If you have any queries relating to Modern Slavery, please contact the Chief Operating Officer. 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.

6 Exit interviews

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 School's culture and concerns should always be raised in accordance with section 5 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 School to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or an appropriate senior member of staff will be protected from detriment under this policy.

7 Confidentiality

The School hopes 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.

8 Anonymous disclosures

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.

9 Procedures

9.1 Stage One

- You should disclose the suspected wrongdoing first to your Head of Department or line manager. In the event that your Head of Department or line manager is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, you shall be entitled to proceed directly to State Two of this procedure
- You can expect a response detailing to whom the disclosure has been notified or any action taken within 7 days of your Head of Department or line manager becoming aware of the disclosure.

9.2 Stage Two

- If no response is forthcoming after 7 days, if you are not satisfied with the way in which your concern has been handled or if your Head of Department or line manager is involved in the suspected wrongdoing you should notify the Head or Chief Operating Officer as appropriate
- You can expect a response detailing any action taken within 7 days of the Head or the Chief Operating Officer becoming aware of the disclosure.

9.3 Stage Three

- If no such response is forthcoming after 7 days from the Head or the Chief Operating Officer, if you are not satisfied with the way in which your concern has been handled or if the Head or the Chief Operating Officer is involved in the suspected wrongdoing you should inform the Chair of Governors of the disclosure

10 Relevant external reporting

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 section 5 above,

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

- the Local Authority Designated Officer;
- Children's Social Care;
- the NSPCC;
- the Health and Safety Executive;
- the Environment Agency;
- the Information Commissioner;
- the Department for Education;
- the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy;
- the Police;
- the Charity Commissioner;
- the Independent Schools Inspectorate;
- the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted);
- the Channel Police Practitioner

11 Advice

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.

11.1 Protect

If you have any concerns about disclosing a suspected wrongdoing the independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline. Staff can call 020 7404 6609 for advice or email whistle@protect-advice.org.uk.

11.2 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 (8.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday) or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

12 The Media

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, and the protection given to you by this procedure may be lost. Additionally, the School may consider this to be gross misconduct and immediate disciplinary action may be taken against you.