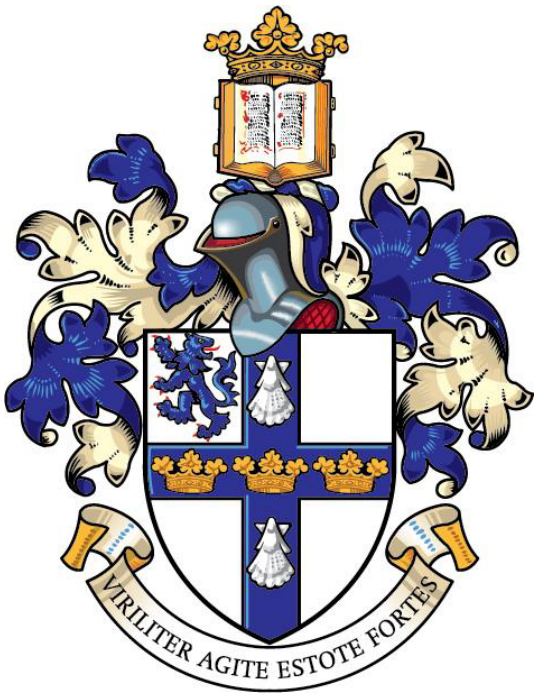


Culford School

Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) Policy

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1. Introduction

The School is committed to running a school with honesty and integrity. Staff are expected to maintain high standards of professional conduct, and in return can expect to find a culture of openness and transparency. The School will provide a safe environment where all member of staffs and volunteers feel able to speak up if they have a genuine concern or suspicion of wrongdoing in the knowledge that any concern will be taken seriously.

This policy enables staff to raise concerns confidentially about suspected malpractice, fraud, health and safety risks, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, failures to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour, unethical conduct or sexual harassment.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects member of staffs from suffering detriment or dismissal for raising genuine whistleblowing concerns. The School takes seriously any concerns raised under this legislation. . However if the procedure has not been invoked in good faith then it may make you liable to immediate termination of employment or such lesser disciplinary sanction as may be appropriate in the circumstances. Anyone who makes threats against a whistleblower in any way, will be subject to disciplinary action. More information on your rights in relation to whistleblowing can be found in the useful links at the end of this policy.

Whistleblowing is different to member of staffs raising concerns about their own personal employment situation. Colleagues should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise grievances about their personal employment situation but follow the School's procedures regarding grievances that can be found in the Employment Handbook.

Aims of this Policy

This policy demonstrates that the School:

- will not tolerate malpractice;
- encourages staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, knowing concerns will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately;
- respects confidentiality and will take steps to protect it as far as is consistent with progressing the issue effectively;
- provides opportunities to raise concerns outside normal line management where appropriate;
- will only invoke disciplinary procedures in cases of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations;
- reassures staff that genuine concerns may be raised without fear of reprisal, even if mistaken;
- provides a clear, simple and accessible procedure for raising concerns.

2. When does the Whistleblowing Policy Apply?

This procedure is to enable all member of staffs to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the school.

In consideration of MIST's Whistleblowing Policy, this policy may apply in the following circumstances;

Malpractice

- Manipulation of accounting records and finances
- Inappropriate use of the schools' assets or funds (including MIST assets or funds)
- Decision making for personal gain
- Criminal activity
- Abuse of position
- Fraud and deceit
- Serious breaches of procedure which may advantage a particular party or actions likely to bring the reputation of the School, MIST or the Methodist Church into question
- Someone's health and safety is in danger
- Risk or actual damage to the environment

Child Protection

- Serious breaches of Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy and procedures
- Poor or unsafe practice in relation to the handling or recording of safeguarding concerns

This list is not exhaustive and should an member of staff or volunteer be uncertain whether this policy is applicable, they should seek advice from the Head. If the matter is related to concerns about the Head then advice should be sought from Culford's Chair of Governors or Culford's Whistleblowing Governor. If there is alleged wrongdoing in relation to a member of the School's Governing Body the staff member can contact MIST's CEO or Safeguarding trustee.

3. Confidentiality

Member of staffs and volunteers who wish to raise a concern under this procedure for malpractice are entitled to have the matter treated confidentially. The complainant's name will not be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator of malpractice without the complainant's prior approval, as far as possible. It may be appropriate in the interests of confidentiality that concerns are raised orally rather than in writing, although all member of staffs and volunteers are encouraged to express their concern in writing wherever possible. If there is evidence of criminal activity then the Police will in all cases be informed.

4. How to Whistleblow (Confidential Reporting of Malpractice)

Culford has set up an external whistleblowing service, EthicsPoint that allows staff to report their concerns about malpractice confidentially and with the reassurance that their concerns will be treated fairly and in line with this policy.

Staff can access this service via the School's internet home page or https://culford.ethicspoint.com/ and submit their disclosure confidentially.

After staff have completed their report they will be assigned a unique code called a "report key." Staff should make a note of their report key and password and keep them in a safe place. After 5-6 business days, staff can use the report key and password to check their report for feedback or questions.

Alternatively, staff may prefer speaking to an independent person at EthicsPoint directly by visiting the EthicsPoint web page using a Smartphone and making a secure browser-based call.

Where the member of staff does not feel comfortable using the independent service, they may Whistleblow directly to MIST CEO where the concern is about the Head or a member of the Board of Governors.

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where an member of staff may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where the member of staff 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.

In most cases it should not be necessary to alert anyone externally. However, in some circumstances it may be appropriate for concerns to be reported to an external body, e.g. NSPCC DfE, Charity Commission, ISI, LADO or police. 'Protect' operates a confidential helpline that will help a whistleblower decide whether an external disclosure is appropriate. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

5. Child Protection and Whistleblowing

Any member of staff or volunteer, who has a concern about a child, should follow the School's Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy that can be found at the School's website.

If you feel a child is not being made safe, that child protection arrangements within the school are inadequate, concerns about the School's practices or if the behaviour of colleagues or others which may put a child at risk of abuse or serious harm should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL) as action may already have been taken and/or the designated staff may have sought confidential advice from partner agencies such as children's social care or the police. If the individual is not satisfied with the outcome of this discussion, they should report their concerns to the Head or one of the other designated staff.

If the individual still has concerns about the safety or welfare of the child, they should contact at least one of the following:

- The Governor with responsibility for safeguarding Vicki Sanderson
  victoria.sanderson@culford.co.uk

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
  LADOcentral@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk **0300 123244**

- Children's social care / MASH **0345 6061499**

- MIST independent safeguarding consultant – Carolyn Eyre
  carolyn.eyre@btinternet.com

- Lady Fiona Mynors
  fmynors.trustee@methodistschools.org.uk

In the case of possible serious harm, the police should be informed. Anybody can make a referral directly to **Children's Services to Customer First 0808 800 4005.**

Concerns about a colleague / adult in school

This relates to concerns that a member of staff, volunteer or other adult in school may have harmed a child/ren or behaved in a way that suggests they may be unsuitable to work with children. Anyone who has concerns about the behaviour of another adult in school should report this to the Head in the first instance, unless the concern relates to the Head.

If the allegation or concern relates to the Head - or there is reason to believe that they are not taking the appropriate action; that the individual does not believe their concerns are being taken seriously - they should contact at least one of the following:

- Culford whistleblowing Governor – Vicki Sanderson victoria.sanderson@culford.co.uk
- Culford's Chair of Governors - Mark Donougher - C/o clerk@culford.co.uk
- MIST CEO – Henrietta Mbeah-Bankas ceo@methodistschools.org.uk
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) LADOcentral@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk **0300 1232044**
- The Police, if the incident or concern is so serious as to warrant a police investigation or a child has been placed at immediate risk of harm.

If staff feel unable to raise the issue with the School or MIST and/ or feel their genuine concerns are not being addressed; they can contact an external support organisation such as **NSPCC whistleblowing helpline (Tel: 0800 028 0285 or email** help@nscpp.org.uk)

If a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately. The DSL will ordinarily make external referrals, but anyone can make a referral directly.

In the event of a member of staff or volunteer being dismissed or removed from working at the school as a result of a referral, the school will inform the DBS.

If a teacher has been found guilty of professional misconduct then the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) will be made aware. In EYFS any allegations will be reported to Ofsted as soon as possible and within 14 days

6. How is whistleblowing Managed?

Any concern raised will be investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. The member of staff or volunteers making the allegation will be kept informed of progress and, whenever possible and subject to third party rights, will be informed of the resolution.

The Board of Governors have nominated Vicki Sanderson to oversee whistleblowing at Culford and will report back findings to the Board of Governors and MIST.

Where there is a lack of appropriate resource within the School to investigate the concern, or the nature or complexity requires it, an independent investigator may be appointed.

In case of any doubt, staff, the Head or Governors can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who can offer a confidential helpline.

7. Important Contacts

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	LADO@suffolk.gov.uk 0300 1232044
MIST CEO – Henrietta Mbeah-Bankas	ceo@methodistschools.org.uk
MIST Safeguarding Trustee - Lady Fiona Mynors	fmynors.trustee@methodistschools.org.uk
MIST Independent Safeguarding Consultant - Carolyn Eyre	carolyn.eyre@btinternet.com
Culford's Whistleblowing Governor – Vicki Sanderson	victoria.sanderson@culford.co.uk
Culford's Chair of Governors - Mark Donougher C/o	clerk@culford.co.uk
Culford's Safeguarding Governor – Victoria Sanderson	victoria.sanderson@culford.co.uk
Protect Advice Line	**020 3117 2520** https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/
Independent School's Inspectorate	concerns@isi.net
Ofsted	**0300 1233 155** whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
Department for Education	DfE online form
NSPCC whistleblowing helpline	**0800 028 0285**
EthicsPoint	https://culford.ethicspoint.com/

8. Useful links/ procedures

MIST Whistleblowing Policy

Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy 2026-2027

MIST Child Protection Policy

Keeping Children Safe in Education

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

Protect

Whistleblowing for member of staffs - GOV.UK

Staff Complaints Procedure – Staff Handbook

Grievance Procedures – Staff Handbook