

# HARLINGTON & SUNDON ACADEMY TRUST



## HARLINGTON AND SUNDON LOWER SCHOOL

**Approved by Board of Trustees: April 2020**  
**Next review: March 2023**

### **Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy**

Policy No: HUS038

Approved By: HUS Business Committee & adopted by HASAT

<b>Document Control</b>		
<b>Edition</b>	<b>Issued</b>	<b>Changes from previous</b>
1	10/5/2012	None- replaces the School Whistleblowing Policy (2007)
2	6/2/15	Internal Review – minor updates in accordance with Beds Borough HR Dept. model policy
3	27/3/18	Reviewed policy

Review Cycle: Every 3 years

## **CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY**

**(Also known as 'Whistle Blowing')**

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The school is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees and others that we deal with who have serious concerns about any aspect of the School or School's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.
- 1.2 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within school. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.
- 1.3 The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 encourages individuals to raise concerns about malpractice in the workplace. This policy acknowledges the amendments made to the Public Interest Disclosure Act by the introduction of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013
- 1.4 The Policy applies to all employees, casual workers, volunteers and agency staff as well as contractors working on the School premises. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the School.
- 1.5 These procedures are in addition to the School's complaint procedures and other statutory reporting procedures. The Head Teacher is responsible for making individuals aware of this policy as and when required and for ensuring concerns raised through other procedures are considered properly.
- 1.6 This policy is a modification of the Bedford Borough Council's Confidential Reporting Policy and consultation has taken place with the relevant trade unions and professional organisations and has their support.

### **2.0 Aims and Scope of this Policy**

- 2.1 This policy aims to:-
  - encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about the school
  - provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
  - ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied
  - reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in good faith.
- 2.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. If the school considers that a concern raised under this policy should be more properly dealt with under the provisions of another policy or procedure, the individual who raised the concern will be advised accordingly.

- 2.3 This Confidential Reporting Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:
- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
  - disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
  - health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
  - damages to the environment
  - the unauthorised use of public funds
  - possible fraud and corruption
  - sexual or physical abuse of clients, or
  - other unethical conduct

### 3.0 **Safeguards - Harassment or Victimisation**

- 3.1 The School is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees.
- 3.2 The School recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you are providing a service.
- 3.3 The School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressure) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith in the public interest
- 3.4 Where an individual makes a disclosure in good faith and in the public interest they have a right not to be dismissed or subjected to a detriment because of it
- 3.5 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary, sickness, capability or redundancy procedures that already affect you or may affect you in future.

### 4.0 **Confidentiality**

- 4.1 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, i.e. if and when, the matter goes to an investigatory stage and a disciplinary hearing, however, you may need to come forward as a witness.
- 4.2 Information may have to be disclosed and an individual's identity revealed where there are legal proceedings following on from a confidential reporting disclosure or where it is felt that allegations made relate to serious criminal offences which the Police should investigate. The individual will be informed prior to this information being released.

### 5.1 **Anonymous Allegations**

- 5.2 This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.
- 5.3 Concerns can be raised anonymously but there are disadvantages if an individual does so and cannot be contacted for further information. This might make detailed investigations more difficult, or even impossible, to progress and it might not be possible to understand fully the information provided.
- 5.4 Anonymous whistle-blowers should also bear in mind that, if they do not make their name known, the Governing Body will not know whose identity to keep confidential. It

will also not be possible to provide direct feedback to them on the progress and outcome of any investigations.

## 6.0 **Untrue Allegations**

6.1 If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If however, you make an allegation maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

## 7.0 **How to raise a concern**

7.1 As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager, their superior or the Head Teacher. This depends however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if you believe that management is involved you should contact the Chair of Governors.

7.2 Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:

- the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates);
- the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

Where a concern is raised verbally, a written note will be taken in accordance with the above format.

7.3 The earlier you express the concern the easier it is to take action.

7.4 Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

7.5 Advice and guidance on how matters of concern may be pursued can be obtained from:

- Head Teacher
- Chair of Governors
- trade union / professional association representative

7.6 You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague or your trade union representative first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns. *However, once you have raised a concern under the Confidential Reporting Policy you should be mindful that any further discussions with other parties may impede the maintenance of confidentiality.*

7.7 You may invite your trade union or work colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.

## 8.0 **How the School will respond**

8.1 The School will respond to your concerns. Do not forget that testing out your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them.

8.2 Where appropriate the matters raised may:

- be investigated by management, or through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry

- 8.3 In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle, which the School will have in mind, is the public interest. Concerns or allegations, which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues), will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- 8.4 Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.
- 8.5 The appropriate person under the policy with whom you have raised your concerns will write to you within **ten** working days of a concern being raised:
- acknowledging that the concern has been received
  - indicating how we propose to deal with the matter
  - giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
  - telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made
  - supply you with information on staff support mechanisms, and
  - telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.
- 8.6 The amount of contact between the officers considering the issues and you will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the School will seek further information from you.
- 8.7 Where any meeting is arranged, off-site if you so wish, a union or professional association representative or a work colleague can accompany you.
- 8.8 The School will take steps to minimise any difficulties, which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the School will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.
- 8.9 The School accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints and confidentiality, we will inform you of the outcomes of any investigation.

## 9.0 **The Monitoring Officer (Head Teacher)**

- 9.1 The Head Teacher (as Monitoring Officer) has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. The Monitoring Officer maintains record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger your confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Governing Body of the School.

## 10.0 **How the matter can be taken further**

- 10.1 This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the School to raise concerns. The School hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside the School, the following are possible contact points
- the School's external financial auditor
  - your trade union/professional association representative
  - your local Citizens Advice Bureau
  - relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
  - a relevant voluntary organisation
  - the police

- 10.2 Before taking matters outside the School you may wish to take independent advice and the charity Public Concern at Work ([www.pcaw.org.uk/](http://www.pcaw.org.uk/)) offers such facilities to employees.
- 10.3 If you do take the matter outside the School, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information.

## THE HARLINGTON AND SUNDON ACADEMY TRUST



We support children in becoming well rounded individuals where they naturally demonstrate the values of the school in all aspects of their lives.