



Kings' Schools

Whistleblowing Policy

2023 - 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within a school however they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or 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 a serious issue.

1.2 This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees, members of Kings' Education, contractors and suppliers to raise serious concerns within the school rather than overlooking a problem or blowing the whistle outside.

1.3 This policy applies to all employees, members of the Kings' Education, contractors and suppliers, and provides them with a secure basis for reporting suspicions of impropriety, in the knowledge that if requested the matter will be treated confidentially.

2. AIMS AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

2.1 Whistleblowing can be described as a disclosure made by an employee, member of Kings' Education, contractor or supplier who has concerns about a danger or illegality that has a public interest to it, usually because it threatens others.

2.2 A grievance or private complaint is by contrast, a dispute about an individual's own employment or personal position and has no public interest to it.

2.3 The Whistleblowing Policy has been developed in line with best practice and aims to:

- Encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice.
- Provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- Provide reassurance that you will be protected from possible detriment if you have a reasonable belief that any disclosure you have made is true.

2.4 The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

- Criminal offences
- Failure to comply with legal obligations
- Dangers to Health and Safety, including risks to pupils and the public as well as other employees
- Damage to the environment
- The unauthorised use of public funds
- Possible fraud and corruption
- Other unethical conduct
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above categories

2.5 If your concerns relate to your own employment, contractual position or your personal position as a member of the governing body then they do not fall under the scope of this policy and should be raised via the school's Grievance Procedure.

2.6 This policy does not cover members of the public and any reports received will be dealt with under school complaints procedures.

2.7 Concerns around Child Protection should be referred through the schools Safeguarding Procedure.

2.8 We recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice.

2.9 As a result, we will not tolerate any detrimental treatment (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern that you believe to be true.

3. WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

3.0 Subjecting a worker to a detriment means subjecting the worker to any disadvantage because they blew the whistle. This could include (but is not limited to) any of the following:

- failure to promote
- denial of training
- closer monitoring
- ostracism
- blocking access to resources
- unrequested re-assignment or re-location
- demotion
- suspension
- disciplinary sanction
- bullying or harassment
- victimisation
- dismissal
- failure to provide an appropriate reference
- failing to investigate a subsequent concern

3.1 If someone is found to have subjected a bona fide whistleblower to any detriment this will be dealt with under the schools disciplinary procedure

3.2 Should you believe that you have suffered a detriment as a result of raising a concern you should raise the issue through the schools grievance procedure.

3.3 Please be aware however, that should you already be the subject of disciplinary procedures, the procedures will not be halted as a result of the whistleblowing report.

4. OPEN DISCLOSURES

4.1 The best culture is one where individuals have sufficient faith in the whistleblowing arrangements and culture of the school to allow them the confidence to make open disclosures. This is where those involved know what the issues are along with who raised them.

4.2 This is the aim for Kings' Education and it is hoped that any individual with a whistleblowing concern will feel able to raise their issues openly.

4.3 This openness makes it easier to assess the report, gather additional information and carry out an investigation.

4.4 It also allows any hidden agendas to be identified, helps to prevent witch hunts and reduces the risk of mistrust and paranoia developing within the area being investigated.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

5.1 It is, however, recognised that some individuals may not feel that they can make such a report. Where this is the case the policy provides the whistleblower with the option of requesting that their name remains confidential.

5.2 Where confidentiality is requested we will do our best to ensure that your name is not revealed. This cannot, however, be guaranteed as there are certain circumstances where the name of the whistleblower may be made known. For example:

- The report is found to be knowingly false, or
- Disclosure is ordered by the courts.
- A formal statement is required as part of a police investigation.

6. ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

6.1 This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible and actively discourages anonymous reports.

6.2 Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the school.

6.3 In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

6.4 Anonymous reports also raise a specific problem with regard to the legal requirement that personal data should only be collected fairly.

6.5 In addition, people making anonymous reports cannot be covered by the safeguards put in place to protect named whistleblowers.

7. UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

7.1 If you make an allegation that you believe to be true, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you.

7.2 If, however, you make allegations that you know to be false, then disciplinary action may be taken against you under the school's procedures.

8. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

8.1 As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your line manager or Principal/Head Teacher/Deputy Headteacher. However, depending upon the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice, this may not be appropriate.

8.2 Where this is the case you should report your concern directly to the Director of Education or Head of HR.

8.3 There are two ways to formally make a whistleblowing disclosure;

- Verbally, either face to face or by telephone, or
- In writing, either by sending a letter or email to the relevant person

8.4 It is preferable for concerns to be raised in writing and where this is the case the following details are requested;

- Your name and contact details
- Background information and history including details as to why you are concerned
- Whether the issue has already been reported to management and the outcome of this
- Whether you wish your name to remain confidential
- Whether you want feedback
- The names and jobs of any other employees who may support your concern.

8.5 Where reports are made verbally to one of the named officers they should attempt to ascertain the same information.

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

8.7 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.

8.8 You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague or principal 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.

9. HOW THE SCHOOL WILL RESPOND

9.1 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.

9.2 Kings' Education should appoint a Designated Officer to be point of contact for concerns raised under the Whistleblowing Procedure. He/she should be a member of the Senior Management Team. The Designated Officer should be impartial and capable of taking an independent view on the concern raised. If this is not appropriate an Independent Designated Officer may be considered.

9.3 As part of this process contact will be made with you to clarify your concerns and obtain any further information that you may have.

9.4 Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated internally
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the Kings' Education.

9.5 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.

9.6 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.

9.7 The amount of contact between the designated officer 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 designated officer will seek further information from you.

9.8 Where any meeting is arranged, off-site if you so wish, you can be accompanied by a professional association representative or a friend.

9.9 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 and support about the procedure.

9.10 The School understands that you may wish to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Therefore, where possible an estimate of the length of any investigation will be provided and, subject to legal constraints, if requested we will keep you updated at least on a monthly basis during the process and will inform you of the outcome of any investigation. This may include where disciplinary action is taken as a result of an investigation but not details of any sanctions that may be issued.

10. HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

10.1 This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue to raise concerns within the School and it is hoped that you will utilise it. However, should you feel unable to raise your concerns internally, the following are possible alternative contact points:

- COBIS www.cobis.org.uk
- BSME www.bsme.org.uk
- KHDA www.khda.gov.ae

10.2 It is stressed that this list is not exhaustive and you are free to contact any organisation that you feel will be able to deal properly with your concerns. This may include;

- your solicitor
- other relevant professional or regulatory bodies

10.3 You should, however, take legal advice before reporting an issue to a body other than those specified above to ensure that you are making a protected disclosure.

11. REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed in the light of operating experience and/or changes in legislation or further issued guidance from COBIS, BSME and the KHDA or every three years if there have been no changes.