

Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) Policy

Queen's College, Taunton

August 2020 (v.5)

Whistleblowing Policy

- 1 Introduction: MIST is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise such matters with full confidence that they will be dealt with properly. Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported as soon as possible. Individuals are encouraged to come forward in with genuine concerns, in the knowledge that any concerns will be taken seriously. MIST's full Whistleblowing Policy can be found [here](#).
- 2 **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. 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.
- 3 **Aims:** The aims of this policy are to:
 - 3.1 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;
 - 3.2 provide staff guidance as to how to raise those concerns; and
 - 3.3 reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 4 **Staff:** This policy covers all employees, officers, governors, consultants, contractors, volunteers, work placement students, casual workers and agency workers.
- 5 **Whistleblowing:** Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:
 - 5.1 Criminal activity;
 - 5.2 Safeguarding concerns (see paragraph 9 below);
 - 5.3 Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
 - 5.4 Miscarriages of justice;
 - 5.5 Danger to health and safety;
 - 5.6 Damage to the environment;
 - 5.7 bribery;
 - 5.8 financial fraud or mismanagement;
 - 5.9 other unlawful or unethical conduct in the workplace;
 - 5.10 the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.
- 6 **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 (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

- 7 **Grievances:** This procedure should not however be used where you have a complaint relating to your personal circumstances in the workplace. The grievance procedure contained in the Employment Manual should be used in such cases.
- 8 **Detriment:** Provided that this procedure is used appropriately and correctly, you will not suffer any detriment as a result of reporting a suspected wrongdoing. A failure to follow this procedure may however make the disclosure unreasonable and the protection given to you by this procedure may be lost.
- 9 **Advice:** If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Head Teacher, Bursar or Human Resources Manager, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Public Concern at Work or the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline.
- 10 **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 2019). In particular:
- 10.1 **Safeguarding / child protection policy:** You should raise any initial safeguarding concerns about a child with the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the School's child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures.
- 10.2 **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 Appendix 4 of the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures.
- 10.3 **Whistleblowing policy:** You should follow this procedure to raise concerns about poor or unsafe safeguarding practices at the School or potential failures by the School or staff to properly safeguard the welfare of pupils if you are concerned that the School's child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are not being followed correctly.
- 10.4 **Referral:** If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to Children's Social Care and / or the Police immediately. Anyone can make a referral.
- 10.5 If you are not satisfied with the way in which your concern is being dealt with, you should escalate your concern to:
- MIST Safeguarding Trustee (beaston@methodistschools.org.uk); or
 - The Trust's independent safeguarding consultant (carolyn.eyre@btinternet.com)
- 10.6 If the concern is with a member of the Governors the staff member can contact the General Secretary of MIST (020 7935 3723; gensec@methodistschools.org.uk).
- 10.7 If the concern is about the General Secretary then the matter should be referred to the Chair of MIST.
- 11 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 paragraph 9 above. If issues have not been identified before, safeguarding will always be considered formally during staff performance development reviews and appraisals. 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.

- 12 **Confidentiality:** We hope 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.
- 13 **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.

Stage one

- 14 **Procedure:** You should disclose the suspected wrongdoing first to your Head of Department / Line Manager. In the event that your Head of Department / Line Manager is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, you shall be entitled to proceed directly to Stage Two of this procedure.
- 15 **Response:** You can expect a response detailing to whom the disclosure has been notified or any action taken within seven days of your Head of Department / Line Manager becoming aware of the disclosure.

Stage two

- 16 **Procedure:** If no response is forthcoming after seven days from your Head of Department / Line Manager, if you are not satisfied with the way in which your concern has been handled or if your Head of Department / Line Manager is involved in the suspected wrongdoing you should notify the Head Teacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead / Bursar / Human Resources Manager, as appropriate.
- 17 **Response:** You can expect a response detailing any action taken within seven days of the Head Teacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead / Bursar / Human Resources Manager becoming aware of the disclosure.

Stage three

- 18 **Procedure:** If no such response is forthcoming after seven days from the Head Teacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead / Bursar / Human Resources Manager, if you are not satisfied with the way in which your concern has been handled or if the Head Teacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead / Bursar / Human Resources Manager is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, you should inform the Chair of Governors of the disclosure. The Chair of Governors must inform the General Secretary of MIST of any allegation against the Head Teacher.

Relevant external reporting

- 19 **Outside body:** The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any suspected wrongdoing in the workplace. The law recognises, as does paragraph 9 above, that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to a relevant outside body including:
 - 19.1 the Local Authority Designated Officer;
 - 19.2 Children's Social Care (Somerset Direct – tel no 0300 123 2224);
 - 19.3 MIST General Secretary-Tel: 020 7935 3723; email gensec@methodistschools.org.uk

- 19.4 the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline (0800 028 0285); email – help@nspcc.org.uk
 - 19.5 the Health and Safety Executive;
 - 19.6 the Environment Agency;
 - 19.7 the Information Commissioner;
 - 19.8 the Department for Education (**DfE**);
 - 19.9 the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy;
 - 19.10 the Police;
 - 19.11 the Charity Commission;
 - 19.12 the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI);
 - 19.13 the Channel Police Practitioner;
 - 19.14 the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).
- 20 **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:
- 20.1 **Public Concern at Work:** If you have any concerns about disclosing a suspected wrongdoing the independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. Staff can call 020 3117 2520 for advice.
 - 20.2 **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.
- 21 **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 this may make the disclosure unreasonable and the protection given to you by this procedure may be lost. Additionally, the School may consider this to be gross misconduct and disciplinary action may be taken against you.
- 22 **Queries:** If you have any queries about this procedure, you should contact the Head Teacher/ Bursar/ Designated Safeguarding Lead / Human Resources Manager.

Effective date of the policy	31 st August 2020
SLG Responsible Member	Andrew Free, Deputy Head

Authorised by	Board of Governors
Signed	Mark Edwards, Chair of Governors

Date

31st August 2020

Appendix 1 School Closure due to COVID-19

During school closure due to the Covid-19 epidemic, staff are reminded that in the event of the absence or illness of senior managers, staff should escalate their concern to the Chair of Governors or the Safeguarding Governor. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to one of the relevant outside bodies referenced in point 18.

Chair of Governors – headgovernor@queenscollege.org.uk

Safeguarding Governor – safeguardinggovernor@queenscollege.org.uk