



THOMSON HOUSE SCHOOL

Thomson House School Whistle-Blowing Policy

Agreed by: Governor's Education Committee
Date: February 2020

Review Cycle: Annual
Next Review Date: February 2021

All the Thomson House School policies should be read in conjunction with the Equality Policy and the Child Protection policy.
If you require a copy of this document in large print, Braille or audio format, please contact the School Business Manager

THOMSON HOUSE SCHOOL

WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY

The Whistle blowing policy is for raising concerns about the conduct of the adults in the school towards the school, it's resources, other adults and children.

Purpose of the policy

The school adheres to the LBRUT Whistle-blowing Policy and Procedures that exist within the Anti-Fraud Framework (October 2016). The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage and enable the Whistleblower to feel confident in speaking up and raising concerns or suspicions
- Provide the Whistleblower with a confidential method of raising concerns
- Enable the Whistleblower to confidentially raise concerns within the school environment
- Ensure the Whistleblower receives a response to their concerns and if not satisfied, is aware of how to take the matter further
- Reassure the Whistleblower they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for Whistleblowing where they reasonably believe the disclosure to be made in the public interest.

This policy enables Thomson House School staff to raise concerns relating to:

- crime
- a miscarriage of justice
- illegality
- inappropriate behaviour of staff
- the safeguarding of children
- health and safety
- environmental or property damage
- unauthorised use of public funds
- unauthorised use of data
- concealing or attempting to cover up any of the above.

It provides additional information to help staff to understand the role of whistle blowing in the context of poor practice and unacceptable conduct and attitudes towards children.

When to use the policy

The whistle blowing procedures and this code may be used by anyone employed by the school in a paid or voluntary capacity who believes they have reason to suspect that the conduct of an employee is inappropriate - including their behaviour towards a child or another adult.

Inappropriate conduct includes, but is not confined to:

- bullying or humiliation of adults or children
- Inappropriate behaviour towards adults or children
- contravening health and safety guidelines
- theft of the school's resources, employees' belongings, data
- misuse of the school's resources / data
- serious breaches of the school's code of conduct
- professional practice that falls short of normally accepted standards
- compromising pupils' welfare but in a way that does not meet the threshold for child protection intervention.

Reasons for blowing the whistle

Staff will naturally be reticent to report a concern about the conduct of a colleague. However, each individual must take responsibility for ensuring that children are protected and fairly treated. If poor practice is allowed to continue unchecked, it could escalate with serious consequences.

Your action not only protects children, but also deters any suggestion that you have colluded with poor practice that you knew was occurring but chose to ignore.

Whistle blowing can also support the member of staff who is the subject of the concern. Their conduct may result from inexperience or lack of training that can be addressed by the school, or they may be under stress and be relieved when their conduct is questioned.

Staff who deliberately fail children and show no remorse or desire to improve are unlikely to welcome being exposed, but their conduct has to be confronted for the sake of the child and the reputation of the whole school.

Barriers to whistle blowing

You may worry that you have insufficient evidence to raise a concern that you will set in train an unstoppable chain of events, that there will be adverse repercussions for your career, that you may suffer harassment or victimisation, or that your suspicion or concern might be totally misplaced.

These concerns are entirely understandable, but you can be reassured that whistle blowing procedures addresses these issues.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects employees from reprisals for public interest whistle blowing. Your union, a solicitor or the local authority legal services can provide you with information about your legal position.

Confidentiality and anonymity

All concerns are treated in confidence and, as far as possible, your identity will not be revealed if that is your wish. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if, as a result of an investigation, you are required to provide a witness statement or attend a court hearing.

You can, if you prefer, raise your concern anonymously. The school would need to decide whether the levity and credibility of the concern warrants investigation if the source of the concern, and the key evidence, is not readily available.

The school will fully support you and do all it can to protect you from any harassment or adverse repercussions that may arise from whistleblowing. Allegations that prove to be deliberately fabricated and malicious will be dealt with through staff disciplinary procedures. However, no action will be taken against any member of staff who raises a genuine concern that proves to be unfounded.

Reporting procedure

It may help if you write down, for your own benefit, what you have observed or heard that is causing alarm. One useful way to decide whether your concern should be reported is to consider whether you would want the conduct of this member of staff to continue unchecked if your own child or another young family member was involved.

How to raise a concern:

- You may raise your concern verbally or in writing.
- You should report your concern directly to the Head Teacher, or to the DSL.
- If the Head Teacher is the subject of your concern, you should report your concern to the Chair of Governors:

Maxine Shaw 07949 029599 maxine.shaw@thomsonhouseschool.org

In the absence of the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair should be contacted. The Vice Chair in this school is:

Smita Rossetti 07956 592470 smita.rossetti@thomsonhouseschool.org

Once a concern has been raised, the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors) will ask you to a meeting, within 2 days, to discuss the concern. A friend, colleague or union representative may accompany you to the meeting if you wish.

Having heard your concern, the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors) will then inform you of their proposed action and set a date for a second meeting (ideally within 5 working days of the first meeting). Timescales will depend on the complexity of the initial inquiry, but the case should not be allowed to stall and you should receive initial feedback within 5 working days. The timescale for subsequent feedback should then be agreed.

At the meetings, clarification about confidentiality will be given and the whistleblower's wishes, regarding the protection of your identity, recorded.

If the concern involves inappropriate behaviour towards children, the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) will be informed.

LADO: 020 8891 7370 or 07774332675 lado@achievingforchildren.org.uk

The school will follow advice from the LADO with regards to the safeguarding of children.

If any member of staff is concerned about the imminent safety / well-being of a child, they should immediately call the Richmond Single Point of Access (SPA):

SPA: 020 8547 5008

Process and outcome

The Head Teacher or Chair of Governors will make enquiries to establish the facts of the matter and whether poor practice or inappropriate conduct has occurred.

- Members of the school community may be asked to provide information or advice.
- External advice, for example, from the LADO, from legal advisors, from human resources or children's services may be sought.
- A written record of the conduct, established facts and outcome of the inquiry will be kept.
- The whistle blower will be kept informed of the progress of the inquiry.

The outcome of the inquiry will be one of the following:

1. No poor practice or wrongdoing is established and the case is closed
2. The concern has some substance and the subject of the concern will receive advice and support from the Head Teacher to improve practice
3. Poor practice or wrongdoing is established and disciplinary proceedings are initiated
4. The concern is more serious and an investigation is initiated. This investigation may involve a legal team, children's social care or the police.

If, at any stage in the process, there is reason to believe that a child is at risk of significant harm, the LADO will be informed and children's social care will be immediately involved.

Further action, help and support

If you raise a concern and you are dissatisfied with the way it is managed, or the outcome, you may contact the governing body or local authority for advice.

Alternatively, you can seek advice from your union or professional association, a solicitor, the police, children's social care, the NSPCC or Public Concern at Work (PCaW), registered charities that offer free and confidential advice on workplace malpractice.

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 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Public Concern at Work

Staff can contact PCaW for further help and support. www.pcaw.org.uk

Whistleblowing Advice Line: 020 3117 2520
Email Advice line: whistle@pcaw.org.uk

Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the Education Committee and will be reviewed every year.

Date of Policy: Feb 2020

Date for Review: Feb 2021