WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

This policy applies to the whole School (including Early Years Foundation Stage) and is published to parents, pupils and staff.

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Moorfield School ("School") adopted this policy and the accompanying procedure on whistleblowing to enable all staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, a failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour, unethical conduct or sexual harassment. The policy also provides, if necessary, for such concerns to be raised outside the organisation.

About this Policy

The School is committed to ensuring that all staff act with honesty and integrity, Staff are expected to maintain high standards in accordance with our Staff Behaviour Policy. A culture of openness and accountability is essential.

Aims

Our policy on whistleblowing is intended to demonstrate that we:

- will not tolerate malpractice;
- encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that your concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, as appropriate;
- respect your confidentiality if you raise concerns and we will provide procedures to maintain your confidentiality so far as is consistent with progressing the issues effectively;
- will provide the opportunity to raise concerns outside of the normal line management structure where this is appropriate;
- will only invoke disciplinary procedures in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations. The policy seeks to reassure you that you can raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisal, even if you turn out to be mistaken; and
- will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all members of staff.

Scope of this policy

If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this procedure, you should first seek advice from the Head or the Bursar.

This procedure has been implemented to enable staff members to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the School.

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing, malpractice or dangers at work. 'Malpractice' is not easily defined; however, it includes allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to the staff code of ethics, sexual harassment, criminal activities, or failing to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice, or creating or ignoring a serious risk to health, safety or the environment (negligence).

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to suspected malpractice within the School. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected malpractice affecting any of the School's activities (a whistleblowing concern), you should report it under this procedure.

If any member of staff feels unable to raise an issue with us or feel that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, you may report your concerns to other whistleblowing channels, such as:

- Protect, an independent whistleblowing charity (helpline: 020 3117 2502, email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk, website: https://protect-advice.org.uk/).
- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline (tel: 0800 028 0285 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk).

Confidentiality

We hope that you will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this procedure. However, if you wish to raise a concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know your identity, this will be discussed with you.

If there is evidence of criminal activity, the Police will be informed in all cases.

We do not encourage you to make disclosures anonymously. However, 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. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should discuss this with the Head or Bursar and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt, you can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are set out above.

Raising a whistleblowing concern

Concerns should be raised with the Head, either in person or in writing if preferred. If you feel unable to approach the Head directly, then the Chair of Governors should be the first point of contact (arhodes@moorfieldschool.co.uk).

A meeting will be arranged with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or trade union representative to any meetings under this procedure. Any companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information as the concerns raised are investigated.

Any concern raised will be investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. You will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. Whenever possible and subject to third party rights, you will be informed of the resolution. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving specific details of the

investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

If you are not satisfied that your concern is being properly dealt with, you will have a right to raise it in confidence with the Governing Board. Alternatively, you can follow the external procedure below.

External Procedures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing within the School. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

However, if all internal procedures have been exhausted, you shall have a right of access to an external person/body. This may include (depending on the subject matter of the disclosure) HMRC, the Audit Commission, the Health and Safety Executive and/or the Local Authority Designated Officer (where the disclosure relates to a child protection issue).

It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate for you to alert the media.

It should be noted that under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where you may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where you reasonably believe:

- that exceptionally serious circumstances justify it;
- that we would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence;
- that you would be victimised by us; or
- where the Secretary of State has ordered it.

We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone externally. The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern.

Malicious Accusations

False, malicious, vexatious or frivolous accusations will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Protection from Reprisal or Victimisation

It is understandable that staff are sometimes worried about possible repercussions as a result of a raising a whistleblowing disclosure. We aim to encourage openness and will support you if you raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if you turn out to be mistaken.

You will not suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern, provided you do so in good faith and following the whistleblowing procedures. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Head (or, if the concern is in respect of the Head, to the Chair of Governors) immediately. If the matter is not remedied, you may raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.

You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

Next review: June 2027