

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

ISI Code:	7b Whistleblowing Policy
Policy Author:	Head of HR
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RGSW WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 The RGS Worcester Family of Schools is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, and accountability. In line with that commitment, we encourage all staff, workers, agency workers, contractors, consultants, volunteers and governors, where applicable, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. Workers who make a qualifying protected disclosure are protected from dismissal or detriment, provided the legal conditions for a protected disclosure are met. Volunteers may also raise concerns under this policy, although statutory whistleblowing protections may not apply to all volunteers. All RGS Schools acknowledge that raising a concern about a colleague is challenging for staff but ask that staff remember that their colleague could be struggling to cope and alerting senior staff will enable us to put any necessary support and guidance in place.

1.2 You as an employee may, in properly carrying out your duties, have access to, or come into contact with, information of a confidential nature. Your terms and conditions provide that, except in the proper performance of your duties, you are forbidden from disclosing, or making use of, in any form whatsoever, such confidential information.

1.3 Each RGS School does however adopt this policy on making a disclosure in the public interest, to enable members of staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential way about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, and failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour or unethical conduct. The policy also provides, if necessary, for such concerns to be raised outside RGSW.

1.4 People working within organisations are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong in the place in which they work. They may be wary of expressing concerns because they feel that to do so would be disloyal to their colleagues or to their school. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may feel easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

1.5 Victimisation or harassment of anyone using this policy or if anyone tries to discourage others from coming forward, will be deemed to be a disciplinary matter.

1.6 This policy complements the complaints procedures already in place and reflects the legal protection afforded by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

1.7 This policy applies to all staff, including employees, contractors, agency staff, and volunteers, insofar as they carry out work for or on behalf of the RGSW schools, and are eligible under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Staff who raise concerns under this policy are protected by law from dismissal or any other detriment as a result of raising a concern. A worker will be protected where they reasonably believe that the information disclosed tends to show relevant wrongdoing, reasonably believe that the disclosure is in the public interest, and make the disclosure through an appropriate route.

2. Aim of the Policy

2.1 The RGSW policy on whistle blowing is intended to demonstrate that each RGS School:

- Will not tolerate malpractice;
- Respects the confidentiality of staff raising concerns and will provide procedures to maintain 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 invoke the School's disciplinary policy and procedure in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations;
- Will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all members of staff.

3. Specific subject matter

3.1. If, in the course of your employment, you become aware of information which you reasonably believe tends to show one or more of the specific subject matters listed below, you must use the school's disclosure procedure set out below.

3.2. Your concerns may relate to the improper, unethical or illegal conduct of employees or Governors. The following specific subject matters must be acted upon:

- that a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed;
- that a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which they are subject;
- that a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur;
- that the health or safety of any individual has been, or is being, or is likely to be endangered;
- that the environment has been, is being, or is likely to be, damaged;
- that school funds have been, are being, or are likely to be, used in an unauthorised manner;
- that sexual harassment has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur;
- that information tending to show any of the above is being, or is likely to be, deliberately concealed;

4. How to Raise a Concern

4.1 If you have a concern about malpractice, the School hopes that you will be able to raise the matter with your immediate manager or other suitable manager.

4.2 Concerns may be raised verbally and/or in writing. If you wish to make a written report the school recommends that you include in your letter, the background and history (giving relevant dates) and give the reason why you are particularly concerned about the matter. You may also wish to seek advice from your trade union representative at this stage if you have one.

4.3 However, if you feel unable to raise the matter with your line manager due to the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved, or if you believe that your senior manager may be involved you should approach the relevant Head.

4.4 If you have a concern about any financial loss or irregularity you should raise this directly with the Director of Finance and Operations.

4.5 If you are personally involved in the matter you raise, please make this clear at the outset.

4.6 If you have followed these channels and you still have concerns or you feel you are unable to discuss the matter with any of the persons listed above, please contact the Executive Head, as Chair of the Strategy Group.

4.7 This procedure is separate from RGSW procedures regarding grievances, please see the RGSW Grievance Policy and Guidance for advice on how to raise a grievance within procedures. Employees should not use the whistle blowing procedure to raise grievances about their personal employment situation, rather, this procedure is to enable staff to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within any of the RGS Schools.

4.8 Whilst malpractice is not easily defined, it includes allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to the staff code of ethics, 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.

4.9 In line with the statutory guidance in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)*, all safeguarding concerns must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If the concern relates to the DSL or a senior leader, staff should contact the Executive Head or the Chair of Governors. Safeguarding matters should always be raised with a Designated Safeguarding Lead in the first instance and if it relates to the DSL themselves, the matter should be raised with the appropriate Head at the school concerned if the DSL is not the Head and, in all instances, with the Executive Head. Where there are concerns that relate to any RGS Head or DFO (Director of Finance and Operations) these should be directed to the Chair or Vice Chair of Governors.

5. How the School Will Handle the Concern

5.1 The school will respond promptly to your concerns by assessing what action ought to be taken and by whom. This may involve an internal investigation or a more formal inquiry.

5.2 If urgent action is required this may be taken before any investigation is conducted.

6. Raising a Concern Externally

6.1 While the school hopes that this policy gives you the confidence to raise your concern with the school, we would prefer that you raised your concern with the proper external regulator rather than not at all.

6.2 It should be noted that under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where a member of staff may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where the employee reasonably believes:

- That the concern is exceptionally serious;
- That they would suffer a detriment if they raised it with the School or a prescribed person;
- That evidence would be concealed or destroyed if they raised it with the School;
- That they have already raised substantially the same concern with the School or a

prescribed person;
- Where the Secretary of State has ordered it.

6.3 If you reasonably believe that the matter falls within the remit of a prescribed person or body, that the information and any allegation in it are substantially true, and that the disclosure is in the public interest, you may contact that prescribed person or body. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2

For the School these include the Department for Education (education, welfare and safeguarding in independent schools), Ofsted (Early Years provision), the Charity Commission (charity governance and finances), the Health and Safety Executive, HM Revenue and Customs and the Information Commission. Concerns that an adult working with children may pose a risk of harm should also be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) under the Safeguarding Policy; the LADO is not a prescribed person.

6.4 You may also contact the following prescribed regulators:

- the Department for Education for concerns about the running of an independent school, including safeguarding; Ofsted for concerns about Early Years provision
- the Health and Safety Executive for health and safety dangers
- the Environment Agency for environmental dangers
- the Charity Commission for England and Wales for concerns about the proper administration of the charity, including fraud and misuse of charitable funds
- the Information Commission for compliance with the requirements of legislation relating to data protection and freedom of information
- the Pensions Regulator for occupational pension schemes
- HM Revenue and Customs for tax and National Insurance matters
- the Director of the Serious Fraud Office for serious or complex fraud

6.5 Staff who feel unable to raise a child protection concern internally, or who feel their concern is not being addressed, may contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line on 0800 028 0285 or help@nspcc.org.uk.

7. Confidentiality

7.1 The school will protect your identity and will not disclose it without your consent, unless the law or the need to protect a child requires it. If the situation arises where it is not possible to pursue your concern without revealing your identity (e.g. the need to give evidence in court or at a disciplinary hearing), we will discuss with you how and if we can proceed.

7.2 Anonymous disclosures will be considered at the school's discretion. In exercising this discretion, the school will consider the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the concern, and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

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

8. Untrue Allegations

8.1 If you raise a concern that you reasonably believe to be true, but the investigation does not substantiate it, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation that you know to be untrue this may result in disciplinary action being taken against you.

9. Who is responsible for the Policy and Timings

9.1 Each Head is responsible for the maintenance and operation of this policy in their respective school. Their role is to ensure that the matter is investigated properly and to maintain a record of concerns raised together with outcomes and they will report as necessary to the Governing Body without jeopardising confidentiality.

9.2 There is no time limit for making a disclosure under this policy, although concerns should be raised as soon as practicable to allow timely investigation.

9.3 The Head of HR will review this policy at least annually.

Sponsor – Head of HR
Approved by the Board of Governors: June 2011
Reviewed and Endorsed by the Board of Governors: September 2012, September 2013, September 2014, August 2015, August 2016, August 2017, August 2018 and August 2019, August 2020, September 2021, June 2022, June 2023 and June 2024, reviewed June 2025, link for prescribed persons updated and time limit information added plus clarification of who this policy applies to. Updated October 2026: good faith test removed, prescribed persons updated, sexual harassment disclosures and NSPCC line added.