



Whistleblowing Policy

2024-2025

Whistleblowing

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

About this policy

Sherborne Prep is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and expects all staff and volunteers to maintain high standards. However, 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 occur.

The School's policy on whistleblowing is intended to demonstrate that it: -

- Will not tolerate malpractice;
- Respects the confidentiality of staff and volunteers 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 procedure in the case of false, malicious, vexatious, or frivolous allegations; and
- Will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all members of staff and volunteers.

Procedure

The procedure is separate from the School's adopted procedures regarding grievances. Individuals should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise grievances about their personal employment situation. If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this procedure you should seek advice from the Head, the Bursar, or Group Head of HR. this procedure is to enable members of staff to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the School.

Malpractice is not easily defined; however, 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 serious risk to health, safety or the environment.

A whistle-blower is a person who raise a genuine concern relating to suspected malpractice within the School. If you have a genuine concern relating to suspected malpractice affecting any of the School's activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this procedure.

If staff and volunteers feel unable to raise and issue with the School or feel that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they may report their concerns to other whistleblowing channels, such as:

- Protect, an independent whistleblowing charity, previously know as Public Concern at Work (helpline: 02031172502. Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk, website: eee.pcaw.co.uk).
- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline (Tel: 08000280285 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk).

Confidentiality

We hope that staff and volunteers 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, then the Police will in all cases be informed.

We do not encourage staff and volunteers 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. Whistle-blowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should discuss this with the Head, Bursar or Group Head of HR and appropriate measure 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

You are at liberty to raise a whistleblowing concern to the Head or Bursar. In the event that it is inappropriate for the disclosure to be made to either one of them, concerns should be taken to the other unless it concerns a Safeguarding allegation against the Head in which case it should be raised the Executive Chair of Governors.

A meeting will be arranged with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this procedure. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your 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 actions will be pursued. Your will be kept informed or progress and, whenever possible and subject to third party rights, informed of the resolution. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of an 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 Executive Chair of Governors who may either deal with the matter himself or nominate another governor to deal with the matter.

External Procedures

Where all internal procedures have been exhausted, a member of staff or volunteer 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 should be noted that under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where a member of staff or volunteer may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where the individual reasonably believes: -

- That exceptionally serious circumstances justify it;
- The School would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence;
- Where they believe they would be victimised by the School; or
- Where the Secretary of State has ordered it.

Malicious Accusations

False, malicious, vexatious, or frivolous accusations will be dealt with under the School's Disciplinary Procedure.

Protection from reprisal or Victimisation

No member of staff or volunteer will suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern, providing that they do so in good faith and following the Whistleblowing procedures.

Bursar