



# Whistleblowing Policy

## Heathlands School



### **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Board.

The policy was agreed by the PWC Committee on 13.6.23.

**Next Review due June 2025.**

Signature ..... Date .....  
Co-Headteacher

Signature ..... Date .....  
Governor

## **Introduction**

The aim of this policy is to encourage employees and others who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school to voice those concerns and feel secure in doing so. It is important that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing is reported and properly dealt with. The school encourages all individuals to raise any concerns they may have about the conduct of others or the way in which the school is run.

Heathlands is committed to the principles of honesty and integrity. A culture of openness and accountability is critical to ensuring these values are authentically lived by.

This policy applies to all employees, workers, agency staff, contractors, service providers, volunteers, and governors.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

This policy exists in line with other school policies and is not limited to the following list:

- Child protection policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Staff code of conduct
- Staff bullying and harassment policy
- Staff disciplinary policy
- Staff grievance policy
- Equalities policy

## **Scope**

If your concern relates to how you have been treated this should be raised under the grievance or bullying and harassment policies.

The whistleblowing policy will not replace any existing policies or procedures. If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this policy the school's disciplinary policy will be used.

Heathlands encourages individuals to disclose any concerns they may have regardless of whether they are covered by this or another policy.

## **What is whistleblowing?**

Whistleblowing means the reporting of information which relates to actual or suspected wrongdoing related to a "qualifying disclosure".

A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest by a worker who has a reasonable belief that:

- a criminal offence
- a miscarriage of justice
- an act creating risk to health and safety
- an act causing damage to the environment
- a breach of any other legal obligation

- concealment of any of the above

is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed.

It is not necessary for a whistle-blower to have proof of such an act for the protections of this policy to apply. They must only have a reasonable belief.

Potential whistle-blowers should have reasonable grounds for believing the information they are disclosing is accurate.

Where a disclosure fails to show that one of the six categories of wrongdoing has been or is likely to occur, it cannot amount to a qualifying disclosure for the purposes of the whistleblowing legislation.

Potential whistle-blowers are encouraged to seek support from a senior manager or their union representative if they are unsure whether to make a disclosure or to access support in making a disclosure, regardless of whether it is qualifying or not.

### **Protections for whistle-blowers**

This policy has been written to take account of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and other relevant legislations, which protects workers making disclosures.

A whistle-blower who makes a qualifying disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any detriment or victimised, because they have made a disclosure.

Victimisation of a whistle-blower for raising a qualifying disclosure will be a disciplinary offence.

Heathlands will not dismiss anyone on the basis that they have made an appropriate lawful disclosure in accordance with the law and this policy.

Whistle-blowers may seek support and advice from organisations such as the whistle blowing charity Protect (<https://protect-advice.org.uk> / 020 3117 2520) or ACAS ([www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)).

### **Obligations for the whistle-blower**

An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is a disciplinary offence. A whistle-blower who is told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority, should not agree to remain silent.

Whistleblowing to an external agency without first using the procedure below may be considered a breach of the Code of Conduct.

It is not appropriate to whistle blow to the media in any circumstances and may be considered gross misconduct.

Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence

### **Confidentiality**

Heathlands encourages individuals to voice their concerns openly. If anyone wishes to raise concerns confidentially, the school will make every effort to keep their identity secret.

Heathlands will consult with the whistle-blower before divulging their identity to any party, including an investigator.

Heathlands does not encourage anonymous disclosures as this may make it harder to establish the credibility of an allegation and may make investigation difficult or impossible. Anonymous concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as far as is possible under this policy.

## **Commitment**

Any matter raised under this policy and procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially.

Whilst the school will aim to keep the employee informed of the progress of the investigation and likely timescales, sometimes the requirement for confidentiality will prevent full information about the investigation and any consequential disciplinary action from being disclosed.

## **Obligations for the Governing Board**

An appropriate representative of Heathlands (Co-Headteachers or named governor) will inform Hertfordshire County Council as the maintaining authority of any qualifying disclosures at the earliest opportunity.

Concerns regarding financial irregularity will be reported to the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS); where concerns relate to child protection these will be handled in keeping with the relevant policy of the school and reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where the threshold is met.

## **Safeguarding Children and Young people.**

All employees have a duty to report concerns about the safety and welfare of students

Concerns about any of the following should be reported to the Co Heads who are the school's Designated Senior Person for Child Protection (DSP):

- physical abuse of a pupil/student
- sexual abuse of a pupil/student
- emotional abuse of a pupil/student
- neglect of a pupil/student
- an intimate or improper relationship between an adult and a pupil/student

The reason for the concern may be the actions of a colleague (including a more senior colleague), a governor, another student or someone outside the school. Whatever the reason, concerns must be reported. Failure to report a Child Protection related allegation will be a disciplinary matter.

## **Whistleblowing procedure**

### **Stage 1 – Disclosure**

The whistle-blower should initially raise their concern to their line manager. They may do this orally or in writing.

If the concern relates to the line manager or any person to whom they report to (other than the Co-headteachers) the whistle-blower should raise the issue with the Co- Headteachers.

If the concern relates to the Co- Headteachers, the whistle-blower should raise this with the Chair of Governors.

## **Stage 2 – Investigation**

The school will initiate an investigation into the concerns raised. This will take place as soon as is reasonably practicable.

The investigation may involve the whistle-blower and other individuals involved meeting with the investigator and giving a written statement.

At any investigatory meetings the whistle-blower is entitled to be accompanied by a recognised trade union representative or a work colleague.

## **Step 3 – Report to Governors**

The investigator will report to the named representative of the Governing Board before any further action is taken. The representative of the Governing Board will decide on potential outcomes including, but not limited to:

- invoking the school's disciplinary process, or other relevant policy
- referral to the police, Hertfordshire County Council department, government department or regulatory agency
- no further action.

On conclusion of any investigation, the whistle-blower will, as far as is practicable and where it is reasonable to do so, be told the outcome of the investigation and what the school has done, or proposes to do, about it. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.

## **Step 4 – Escalation**

If, on conclusion of stages 1, 2 and 3 the whistle-blower reasonably believes that the appropriate action has not been taken, they should report the matter to the proper authority. The legislation sets out a number of bodies to which qualifying disclosures may be made. These include:

- the Financial Conduct Authority (formerly the Financial Services Authority)
- the Health and Safety Executive
- the Environment Agency
- Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Children's services and skills
- the Secretary of State for Education
- the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulator.

A full list can be obtained from the charity, Protect or the BEIS (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) website. Alternatively, an employee may contact their professional association or trade union representative for guidance.

## Whistleblowing for Examinations

If a member of staff involved in the management, administration and/or conducting of examinations (such as exams officer, exams assistant or invigilator), a student or a member of the public (such as a parent/carer) has a concern or reason to believe that malpractice has or will occur in an examination or assessment, concerns should normally be raised initially with The Head of Centre, Sarah Shields, or the Deputy Headteacher, Jason Hazrati.

However, there may be times when it may be more appropriate to refer the issue direct to the governing board, most often when the allegation is against the Head of Centre.

### Examples of malpractice

In addition to the centre wide Whistleblowing Policy, this exams-specific section, includes reference to exams-related breaches including, but not limited to, the following:

- Failure to comply with exam regulations as set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and its awarding bodies
- A security breach of the examination paper
- Conduct of centre staff which undermines the integrity of the examination
- Unfair treatment of candidates by either giving an advantage to a candidate/group of candidates (e.g. by permitting a candidate an access arrangement which is not supported by appropriate evidence), or disadvantaging candidates by not providing access to the appropriate conditions (providing a 'level playing field')
- Possible fraud and corruption (e.g. accessing the exam paper prior to the exam to aid teaching and learning)
- Abuse of authority (e.g. the head of centre/members of the senior leadership team overriding JCQ and awarding body regulations)
- Other conduct which may be interpreted as malpractice/maladministration

### Data Protection

When an individual makes a disclosure, the school will process any personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the individual makes the report is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of dealing with the disclosure.

### Contacts

**Heathlands Chair of Governor for this purpose is: Oyin Kalejaiye**

Or the independent whistleblowing charity **Protect**

Helpline [020 3117 2520](tel:02031172520)

E-mail: [whistle@protect-advice.org.uk](mailto:whistle@protect-advice.org.uk)

Herts for Learning HR Services

Tel: 01438 845111