



# Caversham Preparatory School

## Policies and Procedures

### 218 Whistleblowing Policy

## Whistleblowing Policy

### Scope

For all staff and volunteers who want to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failings in the schools' safeguarding regime.

### Rationale

At Caversham Preparatory School we are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability and we encourage staff and others working with us to raise any concerns about any aspect of our work to come forward and voice those concerns.

The Head Teacher and The Proprietors actively promote a safety first, reflective culture, where employee's thoughts, opinions and concerns are valued. As a result all staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's safeguarding regime and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the head Teacher and the Proprietors.

The content of this document is reviewed annually. Staff members are trained on the schools whistleblowing procedures annually. If you require clarification on anything contained within this policy, please speak to the Head Teacher.

Caversham Preparatory School is committed to the highest possible standards of:

- openness and inclusiveness
- accountability and
- integrity.

### Aim of policy

- To encourage those working at Caversham Prep to report suspected wrongdoing promptly,
- in the knowledge that it will be taken seriously.
- To provide guidance on how to raise concerns.
- To reassure staff that they are able to raise genuine concerns made in the public interest without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

### Definition of Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is when a worker reports certain types of wrongdoing or misconduct within an organisation. The wrongdoing disclosed must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, e.g. pupils, school staff, and the general public.

The wrong-doing must relate to or show one of the following:

- a criminal offence
- a failure to comply with a legal obligation
- a possible miscarriage of justice



## Caversham Preparatory School

### Policies and Procedures

#### 218 Whistleblowing Policy

- a Health & Safety risk
- damaging the environment
- misuse of public money
- corruption or unethical conduct
- abuse of pupils, students or other users
- deliberate concealment of any of these matters
- any other substantial and relevant concern.

The concern could be about something that happened in the past, is currently happening or likely to happen in the future.

Concerns or complaints that employees wish to raise formally, about their own employment, should be raised using the school's Grievance Procedure, unless the employee believes the concern is in the public interest. This includes for example, concerns related to working conditions, working relations, employment rights or bullying or harassment.

### Safeguarding Children

This procedure is separate from the School Complaints Procedures and other statutory reporting procedures. Child Protection issues should be reported according to the specific guidelines laid out in our Safeguarding Policy.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice under this procedure will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that may already affect an individual.

### Legal protection for whistle-blowers

- Whistle-blowers are protected by law from being treated unfairly or losing their jobs because they 'blow the whistle'.
- Whistle-blowers must hold a reasonable belief that the concern they are raising is in the best interest of the school and the children.
- The school's governing body will provide all reasonable protection for those who raise concerns made in the public interest.
- The school's governing body will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate personal support is offered both to a worker raising a concern and to any worker against whom allegations have been made under this procedure.
- Although an employee has certain legal obligations of confidentiality to the school, in a limited set of circumstances, whistleblowing may override these obligations. This guidance sets out the circumstances under which these disclosures may lawfully be made.

### Procedure for raising a whistleblowing concern

#### Step 1- Deciding who to report the concern to

- Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing.
- You can raise the matter with the Head Teacher or the Chair of Governors.



## Caversham Preparatory School

### Policies and Procedures

#### 218 Whistleblowing Policy

- If you wish to report the matter to someone outside of the school you can contact the Single Point of Contact at [Reading.gov.uk](http://Reading.gov.uk)
- Reporting concerns to the media, in most cases will lead to the loss of your whistleblowing law rights.
- Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of your concerns, you will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient evidence or other reasonable grounds to raise them.
- You may wish to obtain advice from a trade union representative, the Citizen's Advice Bureau or Public Concern at Work on 020 7404 6609 and [www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk).
- You can be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague to any meetings that are required.

### Step 2

The person with whom you have raised your concern, will decide what action is needed. They may ask you to provide further information. They will write to you within 10 days to let you know how your concern will be dealt with.

The information you can expect to receive is:

- an indication of how the concern will be dealt with
- an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- whether any initial enquiries have been made
- whether further investigations will take place, and if not why not
- information about support available for you.

The person with whom you have raised your concern will notify the Chairman that a whistleblowing allegation has been made.

Advice on dealing with concerns is available from the legal advisors.

### Step 3

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate.

An investigation may be carried out, depending on the nature of the allegations and the evidence/information presented. Full details of the investigation may be withheld from you to protect the confidentiality of other people.

Information will need to be passed on to those with a legitimate need to have this information and it may be necessary for you to provide a written statement and act as a witness in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings or enquiry. This will be discussed with you first.

Where an investigation is necessary, it may take the form of one or more of the following:

- an internal investigation by the head teacher or a governor, which may, for example, take the form of a disciplinary investigation
- an investigation by the Internal Audit Service
- a referral to the Police
- the setting up of an external independent inquiry.



## Caversham Preparatory School

### Policies and Procedures

#### 218 Whistleblowing Policy

#### Step 4

You will be informed of the outcome of any investigation, in writing, and/or of any action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law.

If you do not feel your concern has been addressed adequately you may raise it with an independent body such as one of the following as appropriate:

- your trade union
- the Citizens Advice Bureau
- a relevant professional body or regulatory organisation
- a relevant voluntary organisation
- the Police
- the Local Government Ombudsman
- Equality and Human Rights Commission

If there is an issue of an exceptionally serious nature which you believe to be substantially true, then you may disclose the issue immediately to the DSL or DDSL as a safeguarding concern.

You have a duty to the school not to disclose confidential information. This does not prevent you from seeking independent advice at any stage or from discussing the issue with the charity Protect (previously called Public Concern at Work) on 020 3117 2520 or [www.protect-advice.org.uk](http://www.protect-advice.org.uk) in accordance with the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

#### Staff Responsibility

- Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of the Head Teacher. Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice.
- This procedure encourages staff to raise serious concerns, without fear of reprisal or victimisation, internally within school.
- It applies to all staff, agency workers and supply staff and those contractors working on the premises, for example, cleaners, builders and gardeners.
- It is recognised that whistle blowing may engender feelings of disloyalty to colleagues or that staff may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however natural, must never result in the behaviour that is causing concern, to continue.

General guidance on whistleblowing can be found via: Advice on [Whistleblowing](#).

[The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline](#) is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled by the School.

#### Whistleblowing anonymously or confidentially

- Concerns can be raised anonymously, but the school or person receiving the allegation may not be able to take it further if they haven't been provided with all the information they need.
- Whistle-blowers can give their name but request confidentiality and in these circumstances, every effort will be made to protect their identity.

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### Policies and Procedures

#### 218 Whistleblowing Policy

- All disclosures made under this procedure will be treated sensitively, consistently and fairly.

### What happens next?

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- The Head Teacher and (Chairman) has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation
- There will be transparency and accountability in relation to how concerns are received and handled.
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

### Confidentiality

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if this is your wish. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if you are required to come forward as a witness.

### Anonymous Allegations

Whenever possible you should put your name to your allegation as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those that are attributed to a named individual.

However, anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at the School's discretion. In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

1. The seriousness of the issues raised.
2. The credibility of the concern.
3. The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

### Self-reporting

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with the Head Teacher so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of our children.

### Further advice, support and contact details

It is recognised that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from the Head Teacher.

Additionally staff can call the **NSPCC Helpline on 0800 028 0285** – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 pm, Monday to Friday or email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

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## Caversham Preparatory School

### Policies and Procedures

#### 218 Whistleblowing Policy

## Policy Administration

### Linked Policies

This policy also needs to be in line with other school policies and therefore should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding Policy

### Quoted Legislation and Guidance

### Review Schedule

The Governing Body has the overall responsibility of reviewing this policy.

Review Frequency – Annually

### Update and Review Log

Updated/ Reviewed By	Date	Notes
N Williams	Sept 2021	
Board Approval	November 2021	
J Lawson	August 2022	Reviewed for Induction CPD