

Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure January 2023

Reviewed by: Sarah Fox

Reviewed: January 2023

Next review: January 2024

Related Policies: Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Complaints and Concerns Policy, Prevention of Bullying Policy, Equal Opportunities and Inclusion Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Grievance Procedure (Employee Handbook)

Endorsement

Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

Name: Joel Chalfen

Position: Cambridge Steiner School Trustee

Signed:



Date: January 2023

Statement of Intent

The Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure aims to help and protect both staff* and children. By following the procedure you are acting to:

- prevent a problem getting worse;
- safeguard children and young people; and
- reduce the potential risks to others.

The earlier you raise a concern, the easier and sooner it is possible for the setting to take action.

** Throughout this policy the term staff or worker includes paid staff, volunteers and students.*

Introduction

Cambridge Steiner School is committed to the highest possible standards and recognises that its staff, students and volunteers are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the setting. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or they may fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects workers who raise concerns from victimisation or harassment. In accordance with that Act and its commitment to the highest standards of service delivery, the setting actively encourages its workers with concerns about any aspect of the setting's practice or any adult's, volunteer's or student's conduct to come forward and voice those concerns, in confidence, within the setting rather than overlooking a problem.

Objective

The aim of this policy and associated procedures is to establish an internal procedure that will encourage and enable staff, students and volunteers to raise concerns about any aspect of the setting's practice, (which do not meet the criteria for being dealt with as a complaint, grievance or allegation), in confidence and without fear of reprisals, to ensure that the setting continues to work within best practice and safeguard children and young people.

Scope

Concerns that should be raised via the Whistleblowing Policy may be in relation to the actions/behaviours of other staff, students or volunteers, or about something that is perceived as:

- unlawful;
- failing to comply with the setting's policy and procedures;
- poor practice;
- improper conduct.

Principles

This policy is based on the following fundamental principles:

- All staff, students and volunteers have the right to raise concerns about perceived unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- The responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all staff, students and volunteers.
- The setting will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect workers when they raise a concern in good faith.
- The setting will do its best to protect a whistle blower's identity when he/she raises a concern and does not want his/her name to be disclosed. However, if the concern raised needs to be addressed through another procedure, e.g. disciplinary procedure, the worker may be required to provide a signed statement as part of the evidence.
- In some circumstances the setting may have to disclose the identity of the worker without his/her consent, although this will be discussed with the worker first.
- Appropriate advice and support will be made available to staff, students and volunteers who raise concerns.
- Those who raise concerns will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation.
- The setting will not tolerate malicious allegations. This may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

Procedures

Procedures for reporting and investigating 'whistleblowing' concerns have been developed to ensure that:

- Staff, students and volunteers can raise concerns (no matter how small they may appear) internally as a matter of course and receive feedback on any action taken.
- Concerns are taken seriously and dealt with quickly and appropriately.
- Staff and volunteers are reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith.
- Staff and volunteers can take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the setting response and seek external advice and guidance.
- Issues raised are addressed via other procedures and policies as appropriate, e.g. safeguarding policy, allegations against an adult working in a setting, grievance, disciplinary, health and safety.
- Appropriate records are maintained for monitoring purposes.

Raising a Concern

Staff, students and volunteers should raise concerns with the Bursar / Operations Lead in the first instance. Concerns should be raised in writing and include:

- reference to the fact that it is a whistleblowing disclosure;
- the background and history of the concerns;
- names, dates and places (where possible);
- the reasons why the individual is concerned about the situation.

Staff who feel unable to put concerns in writing, can telephone or meet the Bursar / Operations Lead. If the concern is regarding the Bursar / Operations Lead, you should contact the Chair of Trustees.

Contact email: bursar@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk

Investigation

The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern. All matters raised, **with the exception of allegations of abuse against a staff member, or unlawful activity**, will be investigated internally. The appropriate person/s will investigate the concerns thoroughly, ensuring that a written response can be provided within ten working days. The response should include details of how the matter was investigated, conclusions drawn from the investigation, and whom to contact should the staff member be unhappy with the response and wish to raise the matter. If the investigation cannot be completed within the timescale above, the staff member should receive a response that indicates:

- progress to date;
- how the matter is being dealt with;
- how long it will take to provide a final response.

In order to protect individuals, initial enquiries (usually involving a meeting with the individual raising the concern), will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations that raise issues that fall within the scope of other policies/procedures, will be addressed under those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved at this initial stage simply, by agreed action or an explanation regarding the concern, without the need for further investigation. If you do not feel that the complaint has been dealt with effectively or you still have concerns, you have a right to refer your concerns to Ofsted.

Allegations of abuse against adults who work or volunteer in the setting

If an allegation is made against a staff member or volunteer, the following action will be taken:

- The setting will ensure the immediate safety of the children.
- The setting will not investigate and immediately contact the Local Authority Designated Officer.
- If the LADO decides that there is a child protection concern, external/internal agencies (eg. police) will be informed by the LADO and the setting will act upon the advice given to ensure that any investigation is not jeopardised. The setting will also follow advice from the LADO regarding notifying Ofsted.
- It may be necessary for the employer to suspend the alleged perpetrator. Suspension is a neutral act to allow a thorough and fair investigation.
- If it is agreed that there is not a child protection concern, the setting will investigate further and feedback the outcome of the investigation to the LADO if requested.

Review and Monitoring

The Bursar/ Operations Lead and the Board of Trustees are responsible for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy in accordance with agreed performance indicators:

- the number of concerns raised via the Whistleblowing policy;
- the nature and type of concerns raised;

- the number of concerns raised dealt with via the grievance and complaints procedures;
- the number of concerns resolved at the initial discussion stage of the procedure;
- the number of concerns investigated via other procedures, e.g. child protection, disciplinary and health and safety procedures; and
- the number of concerns raised externally.

The Bursar/Operations Lead will collate the monitoring information and submit an annual monitoring report to the Board of Trustees.

The policy/procedures will be reviewed and their effectiveness evaluated annually in the light of learning points/issues raised or identified as part of the monitoring process. Revisions to the policy/procedure will be made following endorsement from the Chair of Trustees.

Review of Policy

This policy must be reviewed and ratified annually.

Useful Contacts - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Children Partnership Board – Safeguarding Inter-Agency Procedures

Education Safeguarding Team - ecps.general@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit
Tel: 101

Useful Contacts - Cambridgeshire

Education Safeguarding Manager – Sara Rogers - sara.rogers@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Early Help Hub (EHH)
Tel: 01480 376666

Customer Service Centre – social care referrals
Tel: 0345 045 5203

Emergency Duty Team (out of hours)
Tel: 01733 234724

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) - lado@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01223 727967

Senior Leadership Adviser – Phil Nash Tel: 01223 699448