Reigate Grammar School Group

Whistleblowing Policy

Including Early Years Foundation Stage

Policy Author:	Sarah Arthur, Deputy Head
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Introduction

The Reigate Grammar School Group has adopted this policy and the accompanying procedure on whistleblowing to enable members of staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion about child protection, fraud, bribery, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, and failure to comply with legal obligations or unethical conduct. The policy also provides if necessary, for such concerns to be raised outside the School's internal organisation.

If staff wish confidential, external advice around any aspect of Whistleblowing, they may contact **PROTECT**. This is a whistleblowing charity offering free confidential legal advice to employees, helping individuals decides if and how to take a concern forward.

Website: https://protect-advice.org.uk/

Elements of the Policy

In accordance with Lord Nolan's Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the School's policy on whistleblowing is intended to demonstrate that the 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.

Procedure

This 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.

This procedure is to enable members of staff to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the School including any concerns, no matter how remote or apparently unsubstantiated, related to child protection issues.

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 a serious risk to health, safety or the environment.

Confidentiality

Individuals who wish to raise a concern under this procedure are entitled to have the matter treated confidentially and their name will not be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator of malpractice without their prior approval. It may be appropriate to preserve confidentiality that concerns are raised orally rather than in writing, although members of staff are encouraged to express their concern in writing wherever possible. If there is evidence of criminal activity, then the Police will in all cases be informed.

The Investigation

A member of staff will be at liberty to express their concern to one of the Deputy Heads or the Bursar. If the Deputy Heads or the Bursar are the subject of the concern, then the member of staff should go to the Headteacher.

Any concern raised will be investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. There will be provision for mediation and dispute resolution where necessary. The member of staff making the allegation will be kept informed of progress and, whenever possible and subject to third party rights, will be informed of the resolution.

A member of staff who is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with will have a right to raise it in confidence with the Headteacher and thereafter if the matter is not resolved with the Chairman of Governors.

Whistleblowing and Child Protection

If a member of staff is concerned that the school is putting a child at risk they should raise the concern through the Headteacher. Staff may also contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing helpline on 0808 800 5000 or via email help@nspcc.org.uk

If the nature of the allegation is in relation to child protection concerns then the member of staff must report it to the Headteacher, or to the LADO (the Local Authority Designated Officer). If the concern is in relation to the Headteacher then the member of staff should report those concerns directly to the Chair of Governors or to the LADO. Any concerns about the Chair of Governors should be raised with the LADO.

See the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for more details.

External Procedures

Where all internal procedures have been exhausted, a member of staff shall have a right of access to an external person/body. This may include (depending on the subject matter of the disclosure) HMRC, 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 may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where the individual reasonably believes:

- that exceptionally serious circumstances justify it;
- that the School would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence;
- where they believe they would be victimised by the School;
- 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 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.

Links to other policies:

- Staff Induction
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct