



Whistleblowing Policy

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Contents

Whistleblowing Policy	1
<i>Introduction and Purpose of Policy</i>	3
<i>Legislation</i>	3
<i>Raising a concern</i>	4
<i>Confidentiality</i>	4
<i>Who to raise concerns with</i>	4
<i>What if an issue is raised with a member of staff?</i>	4
<i>Investigating Concerns</i>	5
<i>Malicious or Vexatious Complaints</i>	5
<i>Contacting External Organisations</i>	5
<i>Media</i>	6
<i>Monitoring & Reporting</i>	7

1. Introduction and Purpose of Policy

Whistle blowing is the reporting, by those working for or on behalf of the School, of suspected wrongdoing on the part of employees, management or the Trust Board. Such wrongdoing might include fraud, malpractice, breach of health and safety law or some other illegal act.

The Richmond upon Thames School is committed to achieving the highest possible standards of honesty, openness and accountability and relies on its employees to help maintain these standards. In pursuit of these aims, the school encourages all individuals to raise concerns which they may have about the conduct or practices of others. This policy sets out how such concerns will be dealt with. It applies to all employees, volunteers and trustees. Other individuals performing work on behalf of the school, such as agency workers and contractors, are also encouraged to use it.

This policy aims to give members of staff and others working on behalf of the school the confidence to raise serious concerns using the routes provided, and to reassure staff of the protection they are afforded when they have made a disclosure in good faith. It will be fairly and consistently applied in accordance with the school's commitment to equal opportunities.

This procedure is for disclosures about matters other than a breach of an employee's own contract of employment. Such concerns should be raised under the grievance procedure.

2. Legislation

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (by way of amendment to the Employment Rights Act 1996) is designed to provide protection to workers who raise genuine concerns about specified matters. These are known as "qualifying disclosures". The specified matters are:

- Conduct which is a criminal offence;
- Breach of any other legal obligation;
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice;
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public or pupils as well as other staff;
- Damage to the environment; or
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above.

Richmond upon Thames School understands the decision to raise a concern can be difficult. Provided that the procedure is used appropriately and correctly you will not suffer any detriment as a result of reporting a suspected wrongdoing, i.e. he/she:

- Believes the concern to be true;
- Is not acting maliciously or making false allegations; and
- Is not seeking any personal gain.

The Richmond upon Thames School will take a zero tolerance approach to any act of harassment or victimisation resulting from a member of staff raising a concern in good faith.

3. Raising a concern

As a first step, a member of staff should normally raise concerns with his/her immediate line manager, the Head Teacher or the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where this is appropriate to the nature of the concern. If the allegations involve the Head Teacher, the member of staff should raise the matter with the Chair of the Trust Board.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing, but the earlier the concern is expressed the easier it is to take any required action. Where a concern is raised verbally, the person hearing it must ensure that a written statement of it is made to assist with any subsequent investigation. School management will take all concerns raised within the scope of this policy seriously and identify the appropriate level of investigation, taking external advice as necessary.

The whistle blower may invite a recognised trade union representative or a work colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews held in connection with the concerns raised.

Whilst the school will not refuse to consider anonymous reports, those making them must be aware that it is considerably more difficult to investigate matters properly in such circumstances or to resolve the concern satisfactorily.

4. Confidentiality

We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. All concerns will be treated in confidence and, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.

5. Who to raise concerns with

Concern	Raise with	How
About any member(s) of staff below Head Teacher of school	The Head Teacher of school	Head Teacher of school is Kelly Dooley, her email is Head@rts.richmond.sch.uk 0208 891 2985
About a Head Teacher or Leader with responsibility for safeguarding	The Chair of Trustees	Cathy Bird CoT@rts.richmond.sch.uk Tel: 020 8891 2985

If the employee is concerned that both the Head Teacher and Chair of Trustees are involved in the wrongdoing, have failed to make a proper investigation or have failed to report the outcome of the investigation, he/she has the option of contacting regulatory agencies such as the Department for Education, The National College for Teaching and Leadership or Ofsted.

6. What if an issue is raised with a member of staff?

If a member of staff, other than the Head Teacher or Chair of Trustees is approached by a colleague on a matter of concern as defined in this document, he/she is advised to take the matter to Head Teacher or Chair of Trustees, as appropriate.

7. Investigating Concerns

Preliminary enquiries will be made into the concerns raised to establish whether a formal investigation is required. Immediate action may be taken, prior to an investigation being conducted, if there are concerns for the safety or welfare of pupils or others.

If a formal investigation is not to be undertaken, the reasons why will be explained to the individual as soon as possible. If an investigation is undertaken, this will normally be conducted by an appropriate senior individual with no previous involvement with the concerns raised. In certain cases, this may involve trustees and/or an external independent investigator. The investigation will be conducted, where appropriate, in accordance with the school's other relevant internal procedures which could involve the suspension of staff on full pay whilst the investigation is being carried out. Investigations involving child protection issues will not commence until external advice has been sought from the local authority designated officer (LADO).

Written records will be taken throughout the investigation and the employee will be kept informed of the likely timescale and progress of the investigation. The investigator will be responsible, where possible within 28 days, for reporting formally to the Head Teacher and/or the Chair of the Trust Board on the outcome of the investigation. The Head Teacher and/or the Chair of the Trust Board will be responsible for taking any necessary action, which may include reporting the matter to the local authority, appropriate government department, regulatory agency or the police, and/or taking action under internal procedures (e.g. disciplinary or bullying and harassment). On conclusion of the investigation, the worker will be informed of the outcome and the proposed action to be taken, whilst respecting the confidentiality of individuals and any legal constraints.

8. Malicious or Vexatious Complaints

If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however, an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action is likely to be taken in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedure.

9. Contacting External Organisations

This policy is intended to provide a relevant person with an avenue within the school for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. The school hopes the policy and its procedures will satisfy any person raising a concern that appropriate action has been taken.

The law recognises that, in some circumstances, it may be appropriate to report your concerns to a relevant outside body including:

The local Designated Officer / Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	During Office Hours 8am to 5.15pm, Monday to Thursday, and 8am to 5pm on Friday Tel : 020 8547 5008 Out of office hours: Tel: 020 8770 5000
The NSPCC	Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
<i>The whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally</i>	Monday to Friday, 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM

Single Point of Access (SPA)	<p>During Office Hours 8am to 5.15pm, Monday to Thursday, and 8am to 5pm on Friday Tel: 020 8547 5008</p> <p>Out of Hours: Tel: 020 8770 5000</p>
<p><i>SPA is a multi agency team, managed by Achieving for Children, who work closely with a wide range of teams and partner agencies and facilitates different levels of support depending on the needs of the child, young person and their family. Incl.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Providing professional with consultation and support</i> ● <i>Making referrals to partner agencies</i> ● <i>Access to Early Help Services within AfC</i> ● <i>Making referrals to Children's Social Care Services</i> 	<i>The SPA team is available from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday.</i>
The Health and Safety Executive	<p>Tel: 0345 300 9923 Monday to Friday, 08:30 AM to 5:00 PM</p>
The Environment Agency	<p>Tel: 03708 506 506 Monday to Friday, 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM</p>
The Information Commissioner	<p>Tel: 0303 123 1113 Monday to Friday, 09:00 AM and 5:00 PM</p>
The Department for Education	Tel: 0370 000 2288
The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Tel: 020 7219 5777
The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)	<p>Tel: 0300 123 1231 Monday to Friday, 08:00 AM to 06 :00 PM</p>
The Channel Police Practitioner	<p>SPA Tel: 020 8547 5008 Out of Hours: 020 8770 5000</p>
Imminent threat of harm to others contact	<p>The Police: 999 Anti-Terrorist Hotline: 0800 789 321</p>
The Police	999
<i>If you think a child or young person is in immediate danger call 999</i>	

An employee considering such a course of action is strongly advised to seek prior advice from their trade union or an independent organisation such as Public Concern at Work (www.pcaw.co.uk).

10. Media

You should under no circumstances approach a commercial body or the media with details of the suspected wrongdoing. If you approach any such body and / or where your concern is disclosed in a malicious manner or for personal gain this may make the disclosure unreasonable and the protection given to you by this procedure may be lost. Additionally, the school may consider this to be gross misconduct and disciplinary action may be taken against you.

11. Monitoring & Reporting

The Head Teacher is the Responsible Officer for the school and has overall responsibility for overseeing the operation of this policy and for ensuring that appropriate records are maintained of genuine concerns raised and the outcomes. The Head Teacher will report as necessary to the Trust Board and to other outside agencies.

This policy will be reviewed every two years by The Richmond upon Thames School Trust Board