

TIFFIN SCHOOL

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Introduction

The staff and governors of Tiffin School seek to run all aspects of School business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. If School employees, parents, governors or the School's community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, this policy is in place. It acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion, under the school's disciplinary procedure.

The School is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treat these issues seriously. The School recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system which allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the School environment but which also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the School. All concerns raised by whistle blowers will be responded to properly and fairly.

All staff are made aware of the whistle blowing process through the staff handbook.

Appropriate circumstances for whistle blowing

Individuals are encouraged to come forward with genuine concerns knowing that they will be taken seriously. A whistleblower should ask themselves a few questions before taking action (any one of which could be a relevant circumstance for whistle blowing):

- Is it in the public interest?
- Is it, or do you believe it to be, illegal?
- Is it a criminal offence?
- Is the environment damaged or likely to be damaged?
- Is it, or do you believe it to be, against codes of practice issued by the school, the local authority (LA), the DFE or a professional body?
- Does it contradict what the employee has been taught, or should have been taught?
- Is it about an individual's behaviour or is it about general working practices?
- Has the whistle blower witnessed the incident?
- Does it constitute the covering up of wrongdoing?
- Does it concern actions that negatively affect the welfare of children?

An individual should not raise concerns that are malicious, unfounded or attempt to make mischief.

Examples of issues include:

- Manipulation of accounting records and finances.
- Inappropriate use of school assets or funds.
- Gross mismanagement of funds.
- Decision making for personal gain.
- Any criminal activity.
- Damage to the environment of the school, to property belonging to the school or to a member of the school community.
- Dangerous practices.
- Child protection issues including sexual, emotional or physical abuse of pupils or others.
- Abuse of position.
- Serious misuse or abuse of authority.
- A miscarriage of justice
- Fraud and deceit or corrupt practices.
- Serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example, tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest).
- Other unethical conduct, including the circulation of inappropriate e-mails.
- A breach of any legal obligation.
- Suppressing information about anything listed above.

Whistle blowers are encouraged to put their name to an allegation. If confidentiality is requested, the School will do its best to protect the identity of the person(s) who raises concerns. It will not disclose the identity of the whistle blower to the person who is the subject of the disclosure or to others not involved in the investigation unless it is absolutely necessary to do so and only with the prior consent of the individual concerned.

There are, however, circumstances under which complete confidentiality may be difficult to maintain.

For example:

- If the matter leads to a legal procedure and evidence is required by the court.
- If the issue raised comes within the remit of another school procedure and the whistle blower is asked to provide a signed statement as part of the evidence, thus revealing their identity.
- When the safeguarding of children is the issue.

Anonymous allegations will only be considered if the issues raised are:

- Very serious.
- The credibility of the allegation is considered to be high.
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation is high.

Procedure

The School encourages the whistleblower to raise the matter internally in the first instance with their line manager (or the Headteacher, if the line manager is the one under suspicion; the Chair of Governors if the Headteacher or a governor is under suspicion; the Headteacher, Chair of the Audit Committee and directly with the DFE if the Chair of Governors is under suspicion).

All matters will be treated in strict confidence and anonymity will be respected wherever possible. Written, dated and signed supporting evidence and statements should always be taken to any meetings if possible.

Alternatively, if the whistleblower considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the School, the matter should be directed to the DFE. The DFE will have its own procedures for dealing with such matters. Further information is available here [Whistleblowing for employees - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/whistleblowing)

Stage 1

- As the first step, you should raise the matter with an appropriate level of line management which would normally be your own line manager or a member of staff designated to deal with initial whistle blowing. If you believe that your immediate manager(s) is involved in the behaviour or activity, the headteacher or chair of governors should be approached.
- Concerns may be raised orally or in writing, but it is preferable for an allegation to be set out in writing. An allegation may also be made by phone or email. It is important, however, that when the concern is raised, you make it clear that the issue is being raised under the whistle blowing policy.
- You will be asked to demonstrate to the person that you contact that there are sufficient grounds for concern.
- If the allegation is written, the background and history should be set out, giving names, dates and places wherever possible, and the reasons why the situation is a cause for concern. You should date and sign this statement.
- If the allegation is made orally, you can invite a friend or representative of a trade union/professional association to be present. It is also permissible for a trade union or professional association representative to raise the matter on your behalf.
- If you wish to raise the concern confidentially, this must be made clear to the person who is initially contacted.
- If you have raised the issue orally, you will be asked to put your concerns into writing, which you should date and sign.
- You will be told what steps the line manager intends to take to address the concern. They may be able to take the appropriate steps to investigate the matter raised. Alternatively, they may refer the matter to a member of the senior leadership team, the headteacher or to the chair of governors.
- Once the issue has been raised, you will be contacted within seven days by the investigator who will arrange to meet to discuss the matter. Again, you may be accompanied.
- Notes will be taken of the details of the concern and you will be asked to sign a copy of these notes.
- The investigating officer(s) will carry out a preliminary investigation. This will seek to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can or should be resolved internally. The initial assessment may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance, for example involvement of other members of School staff, governors and/or external auditors, legal or personnel advisors, the police or the DFE.

- Depending on the gravity of the allegation, the appropriate body/individuals will be consulted. It is at this point that it may become impossible to retain complete confidentiality, should the matter become an issue, for example for the school's disciplinary policy or even a matter for the police. Legal advice may be necessary.
- An initial response will be given within seven days. You will be informed of the progress of the investigation and if your anonymity cannot be maintained. If anonymity cannot be maintained then at this stage the individual that raised the concern has the opportunity to withdraw it. However, it may be that the investigating officer now has sufficient cause for concern themselves to continue the investigation, in which case although the School will do its utmost to maintain anonymity, it may not be guaranteed as the investigation progresses.
- When the matter has been fully investigated and a conclusion reached, a formal written response will be sent to you.
- The investigator will also notify the person who is the subject of the disclosure within seven days of the meeting. Upon receipt of the information, the individual will be able to appeal against any decisions in writing.

Stage 2

- If you are dissatisfied with the school's response, you can raise the matter within 14 days of the date of the school's response in writing to the Chair of Governors or, for financial impropriety, the Chair of the Audit Committee.
- The investigator will then write to you within seven days of receiving the letter to arrange a meeting to discuss the continuing concerns and why you are dissatisfied with stage 1. This meeting should take place promptly. Again, you may be accompanied.
- The investigator may then decide to investigate further and will need to decide what action to take. You will be updated with the outcome of the meeting within seven days.

Stage 3

- If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 2, you may opt to take the matter to stage 3, by raising the matter externally within 14 days of the date of the decision letter at stage 2, with any of the prescribed people or bodies recommended in the government publication 'Blowing the whistle to a prescribed person: a list of prescribed people and bodies' available from www.gov.uk.

In taking your concern outside the school, you should ensure that, as far as possible, the matter is raised without confidential information being divulged.

You are protected by law from dismissal, harassment, bullying or other detriment by your employer or other members of staff with whom you work. If this occurs, you have the right to take your case to an employment tribunal.

Links: Government guidance 'Whistleblowing for employees' [Whistleblowing for employees - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

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