Broomfield House School

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

This Policy, which applies to the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is publicly available on the School website and on request a copy, (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required), may be obtained from the School Office upon request.

Policy and Procedures

Legal Status:

The key piece of whistleblowing legislation is the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) which applies to almost all workers and employees who ordinarily work in Great Britain. The situations covered include criminal offences, risks to health and safety, failure to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice and environmental damage. Employees and workers who make a 'protected disclosure' are protected from being treated badly or being dismissed.

For a disclosure to be protected it must be made to an appropriate body. For example, disclosing a health and safety issue to the Health and Safety Executive is likely to be protected, but not if the concern was disclosed to the media.

Applies to:

- Whole School including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and all other activities provided by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours;
- all staff (teaching and support staff), pupils on placement, the proprietor and volunteers working in the school.

Related Documents:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health, Safety Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy and Procedures
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Behaviour, Discipline, and Sanctions Policy
- Single Equalities and Disability Policy

Availability

This policy is made available to parents, staff and pupils in the following ways: on request a copy may be obtained from the School Office.

Monitoring and Review:

- This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher undertakes an annual review of this policy and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Last reviewed: September 2026
Next review: September 2027

Broomfield House School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, employees and others with serious concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing in the School's work are encouraged to come forward and voice those concerns without fear of victimisation. Whatever the source the Headteacher is committed to listening to the concerns, taking them seriously and ensuring that they are dealt with promptly and fairly.

We explicitly require staff to report to the Headteacher, any concern or allegation about school practices or the behaviour of colleagues which are likely to put pupils at risk of abuse or other serious harm.

The Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: Local Public Spending Bodies published by The Nolan Committee used the term "whistleblowing" to mean the confidential raising of problems or concerns within an organisation by a member of staff. This is not "leaking" information but refers to matters of impropriety e.g. a breach of law, school procedures or ethics. Nor is whistleblowing the raising of a grievance within the school (which would be dealt with under the staff grievance procedures).

Those external to the School are encouraged to raise any concerns they have about the way in which the School operates through the School's Complaints Procedure. Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong with an organisation. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the organisation. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. Employees are encouraged to raise their concerns within the School by applying the approach described in this document, rather than overlooking a problem or blowing the whistle outside the organisation.

The school provides immunity from retribution or disciplinary action against such staff for "Whistleblowing" in good faith. At all levels, including newly appointed and ancillary, staff have been given briefing or training on responding to suspicions or allegations of abuse and know what action they should take in response to such suspicions or allegations.

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by the School nor should it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been addressed under harassment, complaint, disciplinary or other procedures. Once the "whistleblowing" procedures are in place, it is reasonable to expect staff to use them rather than air their complaints outside the School.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ✓ encourage a member of staff to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns and practice;
- ✓ provide an avenue for a member of staff to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- ✓ ensure that a member of staff would receive a response to their concerns and that the member of staff is aware of how to take the matter further if they are not satisfied with our response;
- ✓ reassure the member of staff that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for any disclosure that have been made in good faith;
- ✓ the policy is intended to cover any serious concerns that a member of staff has about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of a member of staff or others acting on behalf of the school or major concerns that fall out of the scope of other procedures.

Introduction
The staff and Headteacher of the school seek to run all aspects of school business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. If members of school staff, parents, Headteacher or the school community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, the school has this whistleblowing policy; this 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 treats 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 also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the school.

Policy
All employees have a responsibility to carry out their duties to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability and to come forward when they have serious concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing in the work of the School.

Aims:
- Provide avenues for employees to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- Allow employees to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the School's response;
- Reassure employees that they will be protected from reprisals of victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith;
- There are existing procedures in place (e.g. grievance) which make provision for employees to lodge a concern relating to their own employment. This whistleblowing policy is intended to complement this by covering concerns that appear to fall outside their scope. Employees with serious concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing should contact the Headteacher.

Scope of Policy
This policy is designed to enable employees of the School to raise concerns internally and at a high level and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or impropriety. This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may at least initially be investigated separately but might then lead to the invocation of other procedures e.g. disciplinary. These concerns could include:
- Financial malpractice or impropriety or fraud
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or Statutes
- Dangers to Health & Safety or the environment
- Criminal activity
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- Attempts to conceal any of these.

How to raise a concern – general
Employees are encouraged to set out in writing the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible and the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation. If employees do not feel able to put their concern in writing the matter can be raised by telephone or by way of a meeting with the appropriate person. In any event, employees should try to make an immediate note of relevant details, e.g. what was said in a telephone or other conversation. Employees are encouraged to express their concerns at the earliest opportunity. The earlier a concern is raised, the easier it is normally to take action. When raising concerns employees must declare any personal interest they have in the matter. Although employees are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for a concern. However, they should not attempt to investigate a concern or accuse individuals directly. Employees may invite their trade union or professional association to raise the matter on their behalf.

How to raise a concern – main steps
An employee should raise concerns about any adult working in the school directly with the Headteacher. This can be done via email, verbal conversation or by logging a concern on our online platform, StaffSafe. If an employee

believes that the Headteacher is involved in the malpractice, the employee should inform the Chairman. In some circumstances, confidential informal advice from the employee's trade union or professional association may help an employee who is unsure of how best to pursue a concern about malpractice.

How the school will respond

The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation (the investigating officer(s)) will carry out a preliminary investigation on a sensitive and confidential basis. 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, the school's external auditors, legal or personnel advisors, the police or the regulatory bodies. The action taken by the School will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:

- be investigated internally;
- be referred to the Police;
- be referred to an external auditor;
- form the subject of an independent enquiry.

In order to protect individuals and the School, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations, which fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g. pupil protection or discrimination issues or financial irregularities), will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by action agreed between the employee raising the concern and the person to whom it is reported without the need for investigation. The person with whom the concern is raised will write personally to the employee who has raised the concern within 10 working days:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- Indicating how s/he proposes to deal with the matter;
- Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a response.

Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officer(s), possibly in conjunction with the Headteacher or nominee, will consider how best to report the findings and what corrective action needs to be considered. This may include some form of disciplinary action and/or third party referral such as the police. Employees raising a concern will be informed of the final outcome of any investigation. In some circumstances, however, it may not be possible to reveal the full details where this relates to personal issues involving a third party.

If the whistle blower is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns may be raised with the Headteacher or Proprietor.

Outside agencies

Staff may also contact outside agencies for support, depending on the nature of the issue, such as the HSE, NSPCC, LADO, ISA, IAPS, Protect and others who may be able offer additional advice.

Safeguards

Protection

This policy is designed to offer protection to those employees of the School who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

- ✓ in good faith
- ✓ in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show malpractice or impropriety and if they make the disclosure to an appropriate person (see below). It is important to note that no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the

procedure. In an extreme case, malicious or wild allegations could give rise to legal action on the part of the persons complained about.

Confidentiality
The School will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

Anonymous Allegations
This policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of the School.
In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

Untrue / Malicious Allegations
If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. In making a disclosure the individual should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If, however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious allegations, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

Monitoring
All concerns raised under this policy will be recorded in strictest confidence together with the outcome on StaffSafe accessed by the Headteacher. The purpose of this online backed-up record is to ensure that a central record is kept which can be cross-referenced with other concerns raised in order to monitor any patterns and to assist in monitoring and reviewing the policy.

Conclusion
Existing good practice within the school in terms of its systems of internal control, both financial and non-financial, and the external regulatory environment in which the school operates, ensures that cases of suspected fraud or impropriety rarely occur. This whistleblowing policy is provided as a reference document to establish a framework within which issues can be raised confidentially internally and if necessary outside the management structure of the school. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned. Any actions arising from allegations/investigation must be in accord with the school's disciplinary procedure, which should cover all of the potential areas of concern.

Guidance on terminology used in this policy
Harassment: A person is harassed when they are subjected to unwanted physical or verbal conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating their dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them
Bullying: A person is bullied when they are subjected to offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour which through the abuse or misuse of power makes them feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated or threatened.

Such behaviour may include:

- a staff member shouting at, being sarcastic towards, ridiculing or demeaning a pupil or colleague;
- making physical or psychological threats;
- overbearing supervision;
- making inappropriately derogatory remarks about a pupil or colleague;
- persistent unfair assessment of a pupil or colleague's work;
- Unfairly excluding pupils from classes, projects or events.

Bullying does not include reasonable and constructive criticism of a pupil or colleague's work or behaviour.