

Blossom Lower School and Upper House



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Foundation stage, Primary, Secondary, Post 16

Last reviewed September 2020 Fiona Roberts (DSL)

Next review due September 2021

Whistleblowing policy

This policy reflects the principles in Sir Robert Francis's Freedom to Speak Up review (2015).

Introduction

Blossom House School is committed to creating a culture of safety where the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability are maintained. We value reflective practice and we encourage staff working with us to raise any concerns they may have about any aspect of our work.

It is recognised that whistleblowing may engender feelings of disloyalty to colleagues or that staff may fear harassment or victimisation; however staff should feel free to 'speak up' and will be appropriately supported and valued for doing so.

This policy applies to all staff including agency workers, supply staff, contractors working on the premises, students and volunteers.

This procedure is separate from the school complaints procedure and other statutory reporting procedures.

Don't think "what if I'm wrong" – think "what if I'm right."

Blossom House School Culture of Safeguarding

Blossom House School promotes a culture of safeguarding and staff must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of the Principal Joanna Burgess. This procedure encourages staff to raise serious concerns, including poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's safeguarding regime; without fear of reprisal or victimisation, internally within school rather than overlooking a problem or raising the matter outside.

Allegations Made Against Staff (including Supply Staff, Students or Volunteers)

Allegations against a member of staff may come from another staff member, supply staff member, student or volunteer; a pupil or a parent; or from an outside agency (the police, Local Authority etc.).

Allegations that indicate a person would pose a risk of harm if they continue to work in close contact with children include those who have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates that they may not be suitable to work with children

Any staff member who suspects that a colleague is acting in a way that may jeopardise a child's welfare, or who receives an allegation of abuse from a pupil, parent or outside agency; must **inform the Principal immediately** *[as the Principal is also the sole proprietor of Blossom House Independent School, any allegation made about the Principal should be reported directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) 020 8545 3179; lado@merton.gov.uk].*

In the first instance, the Principal will immediately discuss the allegation with the LADO. If the person is deemed to be an immediate risk to children, the police should be called. The Principal should inform the accused person about the allegation as soon as possible and consider whether the circumstances warrant a person being suspended from contact with children, or whether alternative arrangements can be put in place until the allegation or concern is resolved. Appropriate support for this person will be provided during this period.

Where it is clear that an investigation by the police or children's social care services is unnecessary, the Principal will consult with HR to determine the next course of action. This can range from taking no further action to dismissal.

Parents or carers of a child or children involved should be told about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know of it. However, where a strategy discussion is required, or police or children's social care services need to be involved, these agencies should be consulted first and agreed what information can be disclosed to the parents or carers. It is extremely important that if an allegation is made, the school makes every effort to maintain confidentiality.

For more information on this process, please see [Part four of Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

The school has a Safeguarding Lead Member on the Advisory Body, who may be contacted for any minor concerns around the Proprietor or Senior Management Team. Please contact via the Office.

Behaviours that should cause concern:-

- conduct which is, has been or is likely to be an offence or breach of law
- conduct that has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur as the result of which the school fails to comply with a legal obligation. For example, unauthorised use of public funds, possible fraud and corruption, verbal, sexual or physical abuse, or other unethical conduct discrimination of any kind and waste/frivolous expenditure
- past, current or likely miscarriages of justice
- past, current or likely health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- past, current or likely damage to the environment
- inappropriate discussions which may offend or harm others, undermine fundamental British values, express any prejudicial views, or attempt to influence or impose their personal values, attitudes or beliefs on pupils or staff
- bullying or any other oppressive behaviours

Staff-Pupil Relationships

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all those working with children in a school or education setting are in a '**position of trust**'. Staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted by others and report any such incident. Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust with a child under 18, it is an offence under the 2003 sexual offences act, for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child, or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity.

Reasons for whistleblowing

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour:-
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risks to others.
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself.

What stops people from whistleblowing?

- Fears of starting a chain of events which spirals.
- Fear of disrupting the work or project.
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers.
- Fear of not being believed.

How to raise a concern

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can with your line manager. *The exception to this is any allegation or suspicion against a member of staff of abuse towards a child or children, which must be raised immediately with the Principal (see above).*
- The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why.
- If your concern is about your immediate line manager approach the Principal
- If your concern is about the Principal, or you feel you need to take it to someone outside the School, contact the school's independent body which is set up to assist if needed in such a situation (*details are held in the staff office and with the leadership team*).
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest.
- Ideally you should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history giving names, dates and places where you can.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.

What happens next?

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- Your employer has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation.
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

Confidentiality

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if this is your wish. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if you are required to come forward as a witness.

Anonymous Allegations

Whenever possible you should put your name to your allegation, as concerns that are expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those that are attributed to a named individual.

However anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at the school's discretion.

In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation from attributable sources.

Self reporting

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff members have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with the Principal so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

Referring to DBS (*Disclosure & Barring Service*) and TRA (*Teaching Regulation Agency*)

Blossom House School is aware of their obligation to refer any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) to DBS if:

- They are dismissed because they have harmed someone;
- They are dismissed/removed from working in regulated activity because they might have harmed someone;
- They were going to be dismissed for either of these reasons, but they resigned first.

Allegations of serious misconduct against a teacher may be referred to the TRA.

Whistleblowing advice line

If you have concerns over how child protection issues are being handled in your own or another organisation, you can call the NSPCC advice line anonymously on 0800 028 0285, or email help@nspcc.org.uk. More information can be found on the [NSPCC website](#).

Signed:

Joanna Burgess
Principal

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanna Burgess". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.