

Earlscliffe (Sussex Summer Schools Ltd)

WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY

The school is committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability, and staff are encouraged to raise any concern they may have in relation to malpractice or wrongdoing, so that the matter can be thoroughly investigated internally. Staff and others with genuine concerns have the right under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 to raise those concerns, and to be assured that they will be protected from victimisation, harassment or retribution of any kind.

The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Whistle-Blowing Policy is managed in accordance with the agreed procedure and that a confidential record is maintained of concerns raised and their outcomes. The Head Teacher is responsible for making all staff aware of the existence of these procedures, and staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with the policy and complying with it.

The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If you raise a concern that you reasonably believe to be true, you will be doing your duty to the school and pupils of the school and you will have nothing to fear. The school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressure) and will take appropriate steps, including disciplinary action, to protect employees when concerns are raised in good faith.

Anyone who is found to have maliciously raised a whistle-blowing concern will face disciplinary proceedings that may result in dismissal.

Existing procedures are in place which make provision for employees to raise a concern in relation to their own employment. This whistle-blowing policy is intended to give scope for concerns that fall outside the scope of the complaints procedures or grievance procedures. Such concerns might include one of the following:

- An allegation of unlawful behaviour (including financial malpractice)
- A serious health and safety risk, including risks to the public as well as employees and pupils
- Serious damage to the environment
- Serious neglect of duty
- Corruption
- Unethical behaviour

Any allegation falling within the scope of the school's Safeguarding Policy should be reported to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Raising a Concern

Any concern you may have should in the first instance be raised verbally with your immediate manager. If you do not feel confident, for whatever reason, about raising the concern with your manager, or if you do not feel that your manager has properly addressed your concern, you should raise it with the Head Teacher.

You may prefer to raise a concern anonymously in the first instance, and should this be the case, the person receiving your concern will respect your wish not to be identified. You are encouraged to put your name to an allegation wherever possible because concerns expressed anonymously are much more difficult to investigate. Therefore, anonymous allegations will be considered at the discretion of the Directors. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

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

All concerns will be treated in confidence, and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of any employee who raises a concern under this policy. At the appropriate time however, you may need to come forward as a witness. You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first as you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are other colleagues who have had the same experience or concern.

If you have a whistle-blowing concern you are encouraged to raise it as soon as you have a reasonable suspicion so that the matter can be investigated as soon as possible. There is no need to investigate the matter yourself to prove that your concern is well-founded.

How the School will Respond

The school will acknowledge your concern and carry out an investigation if initial enquiries made to protect those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice confirm that an investigation is appropriate. The investigation will be carried out by senior management, through the disciplinary process where necessary. The matter may be referred to the Police or it may form the subject of an independent enquiry.

You may invite a trade union or professional association representative or friend to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns raised.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

Within ten days of a concern being raised, the Head Teacher will write to you to acknowledge that the concern has been raised and indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter. The letter will also inform you about whether any initial enquiries have been made and may, if possible, give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response. You will be told whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not. You will also be advised of appropriate sources of support and advice.

The school will provide you with as much information as it can on the outcome of your concern, but due to the legal obligations of confidentiality that it owes to other employees, it might not be possible freely to provide feedback on the outcome of any disciplinary action taken against another employee.

If you become aware of continued wrongdoing or become anxious about perceived or actual reprisal, you should report the matter immediately to your contact within the school.

Independent Advice

The school recognises that you may wish to seek reassurance from an independent source such as a trade union or independent legal adviser before raising a whistle-blowing concern under the terms of this policy. The following organisations are possible contact points:

Public Concern at Work 0171 404 6609

Citizens Advice Bureau www.citizensadvice.org.uk

How the Matter Can be Taken Further

This whistle-blowing policy is intended to provide an internal procedure through which concerns can be raised, and the school hopes that anyone raising a concern will be satisfied with the action taken. Should you feel unable to raise a concern with either your immediate manager, or the Head Teacher, because the allegations relate to them, you should contact a Governor and if this does not resolve the matter you should seek independent advice. An employee should not take concerns directly to the media without first complying with this policy.