

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



Policy	Whistleblowing Policy
Responsible Manager	Andrew White
Approval Date	September 2026
Review Date	May 2028
Approved by	Headteacher

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1. Aims

The primary cultural aim of a whistleblowing policy is to cultivate a safe, transparent "speak-up" environment where identifying and correcting wrongdoing is treated as a normal, valued part of daily operations.

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and that their confidentiality will be respected
- Let all staff in the trust know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the trust
- Set clear procedures for how the trust will respond to such concerns
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing concern
- Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue)
- Ensure that concerns about safeguarding practices and potential failures in the school's safeguarding regime are taken seriously by the senior leadership team

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the trust in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

2. Legislation

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the [Academy Trust Handbook](#). The requirement to have clear whistleblowing procedures in place is set out in statutory safeguarding guidance **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)**, which states that appropriate whistleblowing procedures should be in place for concerns to be raised with the school's senior leadership team.

This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as government guidance on whistleblowing. We also take into account the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998** and the **Employment Rights Act 1996**.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Definition of whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistle-blowing include (but are not limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staff health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

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- Damage to the environment
- Concerns about safeguarding practices or child protection failures
- Concerns about a colleague's behaviour towards children that may indicate they pose a risk of harm
- Failure to follow safeguarding procedures or report safeguarding concerns
- Practices that put children at risk of harm
- Attempts to cover up safeguarding failures

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the trust count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistle-blowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

When staff have a concern they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- [Further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- A free and confidential [advice line](#)

4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern

4.1 When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in section 3 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or trust procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

4.2 Who to report to

Staff should report their concern to the Headteacher or any other member of the Executive team. If the concern is about the Headteacher or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Chair of Governors or Chair of Finances and Resources.

4.2a Concerns about staff conduct towards children

If the whistleblowing concern relates to an allegation that a member of staff (including supply staff, volunteers, or contractors) has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

This should be reported immediately to the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors if the concern is about the Headteacher) who will follow the school's allegations management procedures in line with Part Four of Keeping Children Safe in Education. In the event of a concern about the Headteacher where the Headteacher

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is also the sole proprietor, or where there is a conflict of interest, this should be reported directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

4.3 How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

While we encourage staff to put their name to concerns wherever possible, we recognise this may not always feel appropriate. **Anonymous concerns** will be considered and investigated as far as possible, though this may limit our ability to:

- Seek clarification or further information
- Provide feedback on the outcome
- Protect the individual from any detriment

Staff raising anonymous concerns should provide as much detail as possible to enable a thorough investigation.

5. Trust procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern

5.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the Headteacher, Executive team, Chair of Governors or Chair of Finances & Resources - referred to from here as the 'recipient' - they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time (normally within 5 working days). The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting and record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure
- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken (see section 6 of this policy)
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:
 - The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the Headteacher, Executive Team, Chair of Governors, Chair of Finance & Resources, if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In other cases, they may need to report the matter to the police
 - The person who raised the concern should be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps

5.2 Outcome of the investigation

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations

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and details on how the matter can be rectified, and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police. An update on progress will be provided on completion of the investigation within a reasonable timeframe depending on the complexity of the concern, keeping the whistleblower informed of progress.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the headteacher, trustees and other staff, if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

5.3 Record keeping

The school will keep a record of all whistleblowing concerns raised, including:

- The nature of the concern
- How the concern was investigated
- The outcome of the investigation
- Any action taken

Records will be kept confidentially and securely in accordance with data protection legislation. Records relating to safeguarding concerns will be retained in line with the school's safeguarding record retention policy.

5.4 Protection from detriment

The school will not tolerate any harassment, victimisation, unfair treatment or dismissal of staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if the concerns turn out to be unfounded (provided they were raised in good faith). Any such behaviour will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Staff who raise concerns in accordance with this policy will be protected from any detriment, including:

- Dismissal
- Disciplinary action
- Threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern

If a member of staff believes they have suffered any such treatment as a result of raising a concern, they should inform the Headteacher or Chair of Governors immediately.

6. Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

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6.1 Settlement agreements

Settlement agreements (sometimes referred to as compromise agreements) will not be used where there are allegations that indicate a person is a risk or poses a risk of harm to children or is deemed not suitable to work with children. Such agreements will not prevent:

- A thorough investigation where appropriate
- Fulfilling the school's legal duty to refer cases to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) where the referral criteria are met
- Providing references to potential employers when requested
- Considering whether to make a referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) where the criteria are met

7. Escalating concerns beyond the trust

The trust encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 4 of this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#).

The Protect advice line, linked to in section 3 of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party. Their details are:-

Telephone - Whistleblowing Advice Line: 020 3117 2520

Email - via their website, <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/>

NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

Where a staff member feels unable to raise a safeguarding concern with the school's senior leadership team, or feels that their genuine concerns about child protection failures are not being addressed, the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line is available as an alternative route.

- **Telephone:** 0800 028 0285 (08:00-20:00 Monday-Friday, 09:00-18:00 weekends)
- **Email:** help@nspcc.org.uk
- **Address:** National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH

General whistleblowing guidance

General advice on whistleblowing can be found on GOV.UK at: www.gov.uk/whistleblowing

8. Approval

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

These procedures have been agreed by the board of trustees, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

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9. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff behaviour policy (code of conduct)
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Allegations against staff policy
- Staff grievance policy
- Complaints procedure
- Disciplinary policy
- Data protection policy