

## Policy

### Whole School Whistleblowing Policy

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*SES is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its students. A UK ICPC or equivalent police check is a prerequisite for all appointments.*

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## **Introduction**

Sharjah English School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. We expect that staff at all levels will protect the School and its resources. They will lead by example, ensuring high standards of personal conduct and adherence to the school policies, procedures and rules.

We encourage our staff, governors, parents and students with any concerns about any aspect of the School's work to come forward and voice their concerns. We acknowledge that making a decision to raise a concern can be difficult. This policy outlines the Whistleblowing process for all parties.

Sharjah English School will take all appropriate measures to protect the School, including its children, to reduce the risk of an irregularity occurring from either internal or external sources. Whenever an irregularity of any description is discovered, it will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken. The action we take will be influenced by the irregularity or concern raised.

## **Our Aims**

This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable anyone to raise concerns within the School, without fear of reprisals, rather than overlooking a problem or blowing the whistle outside.

## **Aims of the Policy**

- Provide avenues to raise concerns and receive appropriate feedback on any action taken
- Allow escalation of the matter if dissatisfied with the School's response
- Reassure staff concerned that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing providing reasonable belief that they have made a disclosure in the public interest. (The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 allows for specific protection for employees and workers that whistle blow - not applicable in UAE but sentiments will hold)

## **Whistleblower or Complainant?**

Whistleblowing: The act of reporting concerns of wrong-doing so that they may be investigated and acted upon. The term whistle-blower is typically reserved for employees that whistle blow about actual or suspected wrongdoing within their own organisation.

- If the concern is about wrong doing and affects others and not just one individual, family or household then you are likely a whistle-blower
- Is unlawful
- Is against the School's policies and procedures

- Falls below established standards or practice
- Amounts to improper conduct

This could cover but not limited to the following:

1. **Corruption or Bribery:** including offering or accepting a reward for performing or failing to perform an act which leads to a gain for the person offering the bribe, e.g. the offering or acceptance, by any School official or representative, of any incentive for them to do something that they should not, such as make a decision contrary to policies or procedures, disclose information that they should not or provide or deny services contrary to policies or entitlements.

2. **Theft:** the dishonest taking of property belonging to another person with the intention of depriving the owner permanently of its possessions or their use, e.g. the theft/asset/goods/stocks, misuse of school funds for purposes other than they were made available or theft of cash or equipment.

3. **Fraud:** fraud is an act of deception intended for personal gain, or to cause a loss to another party. The general criminal offence of fraud can include:

- i. Deception whereby someone knowingly makes false representation in order to gain an advantage (this can include the intentional distortion of financial statements to conceal losses, misrepresent performance or conceal misappropriation of assets)
- ii. Failure to disclose information for their own advantage
- iii. Abuse a position of trust for their own advantage, eg. abuse of School services for personal use, dishonest awards of contracts to family or friends, dishonest manipulation of performance information or targets to award pay increments or other incentives etc

4. Failure to observe, and breaches of, the law and statutory responsibilities:

- i. Dangerous procedures risking health and safety to the public and/or employees/students.
- ii. Damage or the risk of damage to the environment by inappropriate, dishonest or negligent acts.
- iii. Abuse or bullying including children
- iv. Abuse or a failure to properly protect children by members of the school staff and Governors either through their action or inaction
- v. Failure to observe, or breaches of the school's policies and procedures including contract procedure rules and financial procedure rules or other policies.
- vi. Inappropriate use of School assets such as vehicles, machinery, computers or software licences.

If the concern affects yourself, your family or your household and is not about wrongdoing, then you are likely to be a complainant. Some examples of complaints and issues that fall outside of the Whistleblowing Policy are:

- Employee grievances such as bullying and harassment
- Disputes over pay, bills, leases etc. (except where there are suspicions of wrongdoing)
- Dissatisfaction with a policy

- Dissatisfaction with the quality or level of service received from the school (except where there are suspicions of wrongdoing)
- Dissatisfaction with a School decision (except where there are suspicions of wrongdoing)

There are existing policies in place to enable complaints to be heard

### **School's Complaints Procedures**

#### **Complaints Procedure**

1. The Grievance Policy/Procedure - This policy is for employees wishing to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment.
2. Dignity at work Policy (Bullying and Harassment) - This policy is for employees wishing to report bullying or harassment at work.

### **Anonymous Allegations and Confidentiality**

Any concerns that are raised will be treated seriously, confidentially and will be investigated as appropriate. During our investigations, we will treat any information you give us confidentially. However, whilst we endeavour to protect you, we also need to ensure that we fairly investigate the concern. This may mean that some of the details passed to us need to be passed on to the person being investigated in the interests of a fair investigation /hearing. In these instances, we may not be able to investigate your concerns without revealing some of the details you give us. Any concerns raised anonymously will still be considered, but it may not be possible in all cases to investigate them.

We will take all steps possible to protect your identity and confidentiality. Where it is not possible to investigate the concerns without compromising this, we will discuss this with you first. If you request to remain anonymous, all efforts will be made to ensure this is respected and if at all possible, the School, if requested, will not reveal its source.

The factors to be taken into account in determining whether to proceed with an anonymous allegation would include:

- The seriousness of the issue raised
- The credibility of the concern, and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources without your information/statements.

### **Untrue Allegations**

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you.

If, however, you make malicious or vexatious allegations, legal or disciplinary action may be taken against you.

## **How to Raise a Concern**

Concerns are best raised as early as possible. The earlier you raise a concern, the easier it is to investigate and take action. Early Whistleblowing minimises the impact on the School and its stakeholders.

If your concern is about the School but does not relate to the Principal then you should contact him/her directly.

If your concern is about the School and the Principal you should contact the Head of School or Director of Finance and HR.

Please note you may invite the Board of Governors Staff Representative or someone else of your choosing to assist you in raising a concern providing that person is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

Any concerns in writing should include as much detail as you are able to provide. Where possible, please set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation. The more information that is provided the better the School can determine the right course of action.

If you do not feel able to put your concerns in writing, you can telephone the Principal and remain anonymous if you want to.

## **Concerns about safeguarding and the protection of children**

The school takes seriously its responsibilities regarding the safeguarding of children. Please refer to our safeguarding policy for details on how to address them.

## **How the School will respond**

The action taken at the school will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:

- Be investigated internally. You will be advised if it is considered that the matter falls within the grievance or complaints or another procedure – the decision whether it falls outside of the Whistleblowing procedure will be taken in consultation with the Director of Human Resources and or/Head of School..
- Be referred to the police
- Be referred to the External Auditor
- Form the subject of an independent inquiry

Where a concern is about fraud, theft, bribery or corruption, the Director of Finance will be notified and involved/consulted in any subsequent investigation (providing they are not directly involved in the concern). If the Director of Finance is the reason for the concern the Principal will advise the next steps.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

Providing we have been given contact details, School will write to you within 20 working days:

- Acknowledge that the concern has been received
- Indicate how we propose to deal with the matter
- Give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Update on whether any initial enquiries have been made, and

- Advise you whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not

It is important that concerns are properly reviewed and addressed. Whilst the School must comply with relevant legislation including the Data Protection Act, we will keep you informed as to the outcome of any investigation. Please be aware that specific personal information relating to individuals cannot be released. This will include details of any action taken against individuals.

### **How the matter can be taken further**

This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue to raise concerns within the School. The School hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter further you can ask your staff representative to raise the matter directly with the Board of Governors.

### **Emergencies**

If your concern relates to immediate endangerment of life or to suspected terrorism you should contact the police.