



St Christopher's School

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Policy to be reviewed annually		
Reviewed by	Bursar	Sept 2021
Approved by	Head	Sept 2021
Board Approval	Safeguarding and Wellbeing Committee	Sept 2021

To be published on	
School network	✓
School website (if appropriate)	✓

Accessibility notice

To enable easier reading, this Policy is available in a larger font upon request

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1. Aims of Policy

The School expects all staff to maintain high standards and to report any wrongdoing that falls short of these fundamental principles. It is the responsibility of all staff to raise any concerns that they might have about malpractice within the workplace. The aim of this policy is to ensure that staff are confident that they can raise any matters of genuine concern without fear of reprisals, in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously and that the matters will be investigated appropriately and regarded as confidential.

The following guidance sets out the procedure by which staff can report concerns about workplace practices. The Board of Governors have designated the Bursar to be responsible for ensuring this procedure is correctly followed and maintained.

2. What disclosures are covered?

This policy is distinct from the Grievance Procedure. If an employee has a complaint relating to personal circumstances in the workplace then the Grievance Procedure should be used. Concerns about malpractice within the School which falls within the categories listed below and affects or could affect, for example, pupils, parents, members of the public or other members of staff should be raised using this procedure:

- a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed, or is likely to be committed; or
- a person has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail to comply with their legal obligations; or
- a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur; or
- the health and safety of any individual has been, is being, or is likely to be endangered; or the environment has been, is being, or is likely to be damaged; or
- any of the above matters are being deliberately concealed or are likely to be deliberately concealed.

Particular concerns which may fall within the terms of this policy include, for example, breach of confidentiality, breach of child protection measures, financial fraud, harassment occurring to others and breaches of health and safety. In general, this policy can be used to report actions or omissions that may be illegal, contrary to the School's established policies or procedures or outside the scope of an individual's authority, actions which could damage our business or reputation, and conflicts of interest.

The School values any concerns reported in good faith under this procedure. If an employee is uncertain whether the matters concerning them are within the scope of this policy, the employee should report the concerns to the Bursar, in accordance with this procedure.

3. To whom should a disclosure be made?

In the case of child protection concerns, the initial disclosure should be made in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Thereafter, any child protection issues must follow appropriate procedures as identified by the relevant authorities.

In all other circumstances, concerns should be raised with the Bursar. The Bursar reports to the Board of Governors. In the absence of the Bursar, the Chair of Board of Governors may nominate another officer to carry out the Bursar's duties under this policy.

If the disclosure is extremely serious or in any way involves the Bursar or the Head, it should be reported directly to the Board of Governors.

The School will always endeavour to handle investigations promptly and fairly, but if an employee has made a disclosure in accordance with this policy and is not satisfied with the investigation or its conclusion, the employee should write directly to the Chair of the Board of Governors detailing the concerns.

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any workplace wrongdoing. It is therefore hoped that it will not be necessary for workers to alert external organisations. However, in very serious circumstances, the School recognises that it may be appropriate to report concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to go direct to the press. The Government has prescribed a list of appropriate external bodies for reporting certain matters, including (for example) the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive. A full list is available from Protect (formerly known as Public Concern at Work), an independent charity.

If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline, or the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line. Their contact details are:

Public Concern at Work (Independent whistle blowing charity)

Helpline: 020 7404 6609 E-mail: whistle@pcaw.co.uk Website: www.pcaw.co.uk

NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line Helpline: 0800 028 0285 E-mail: help@nspcc.org.uk

4. How should a disclosure be made?

Employees can raise concerns with the Bursar orally or in writing, stating that the employee is using the Whistleblowing Policy. The Bursar will ask the employee to formalise their concerns in writing either before or after the first meeting. The Bursar, will acknowledge receipt of the formal written disclosure and keep a record of further action taken.

Employees are entitled to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or union representative at any meeting with the Bursar (or, if the Bursar is unavailable, an individual acting in the Bursar's place) under this procedure. Any companion will be asked to respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

The School recognises that disclosures made under this policy may involve highly confidential and sensitive matters and that an employee may prefer to make an anonymous disclosure. However, we regret that the School cannot guarantee to investigate all anonymous allegations. Proper investigation may prove impossible if the investigator cannot obtain further information from the employee, give feedback, or ascertain whether the disclosure was made in good faith. Whistle-blowers should reveal their identity to the Bursar and measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality as appropriate.

5. Investigation of disclosure

The School is committed to investigating disclosures fully, fairly, promptly and confidentially where circumstances permit. Following formal written disclosure, the Bursar, (or another individual acting in their place) will acknowledge receipt and make appropriate arrangements for investigation. The employee may be required to attend an initial meeting in order to give the Bursar further information.

The length and scope of the investigation will depend on the subject matter of the disclosure. In most instances, the Bursar, will carry out an initial assessment of the disclosure to determine whether there are grounds for a more detailed investigation to take place.

So far as the Bursar considers it appropriate and practicable, the employee will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation. However, the need for confidentiality may prevent the School giving the employee specific details of the investigation or actions taken. It is not normally appropriate to set a specific timeframe for completion of investigations in advance, as the diverse nature of disclosures contemplated makes this unworkable. The School will, however, aim to deal with all disclosures in a timely manner and with due regard to the rights of all individuals involved.

The School recognise that there may be matters that cannot be dealt with internally and in respect of which external authorities will need to be notified and become involved either during or after our investigation. The School will endeavour to inform an employee who has raised a concern if a referral to an external authority is about to or has taken place, although the School may need to make such a referral without the knowledge or consent of the employee if it considers it appropriate.

6. Confidentiality

If an employee wants to raise their concern confidentially, the School will make every effort to keep the employee's identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating the concern. In order not to jeopardise the investigation into the alleged malpractice, employees will also be expected to keep the fact that they have raised a concern, the nature of the concern and the identity of those involved confidential.

There may, however, be circumstances in which, because of the nature of the investigation or disclosure, it will be necessary to disclose the employee's identity. If in the School's view such circumstances exist, the School will make efforts to inform the employee that their identity is likely to be disclosed.

7. Safeguarding

If a member of staff suspects that there is a serious safeguarding issue that they feel that the Head is not taking seriously or that they believe there is a serious safeguarding issue involving the Head they should in the first instance contact the Designated Safeguarding Governor.

8. Self-reporting

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

9. Protection and support for whistle-blowers

Members of staff who raise genuinely-held concerns in good faith under this procedure will not be dismissed or subjected to any detriment as a result of their disclosure. Workers/employees who victimise or retaliate against whistle-blowers under this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

If an investigation under this procedure concludes that a disclosure has been made maliciously, vexatiously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain, the whistle-blower will be subject to disciplinary action. Those who make disclosures anonymously or without following the guidelines in this policy may not receive the protection outlined above.

10. Summary of relevant contact details

Designated Safeguarding Lead	Maria O'Neill	Maria.oneill@stchristophers.london Out of hours: 07712531161
Bursar	Emma Ghosh	bursar@stchristophers.london 020 7433 6901 Out of hours: 07909 622 264
Designated Safeguarding Governor	Sarah Kavanaugh	Sarah.kavanaugh@stchristophers.london