

GORDON'S SCHOOL

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The core principle that guides everything we do is **Putting Students First**.

1. Introduction

The Gordon Foundation and Gordon's School (the School) are committed to the highest standards of quality, honesty, openness and accountability.

As part of that commitment, the School encourages employees or others with genuine concerns about any aspect of work to come forward and express those concerns. We recognise that employees will need to come forward on a confidential basis.

2. Purpose of the Policy

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong. However, employees may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or the School. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. Each person working for the School needs to realise that they not only have the right, but also a duty to report any improper actions or omissions.

The School also recognises and appreciates that staff who raise concerns regarding malpractice or wrongdoing are an asset to the School, and not a threat. This policy makes it clear that they can raise concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable staff to raise genuine concerns within the School.

3. Scope of the Policy

There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to raise grievances about their own employment. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover serious concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures, in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. A protected disclosure means a disclosure which is made in the public interest by a worker who has a reasonable belief that:

- a criminal offence;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- an act creating risk to health and safety;
- an act causing damage to the environment;
- a breach of any other legal obligation; or
- concealment of any of the above;
- is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed.

'Whistleblowing' means the confidential raising of problems or concerns within the School in accordance with the provisions of this policy. This will include any illegal, immoral, irregular, dangerous or unethical activity under their employer's control. This can cover a wide range of matters, including mismanagement, bribery, fraud and health and safety failures.

4. Safeguarding against Harassment or Victimisation

No member of staff will suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern.

The School will take a zero tolerance approach to any act of harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect staff when they raise a genuine and legitimate concern.

5. Unsubstantiated Allegations

Any employee who makes an allegation that turns out to be unfounded will not be penalised for being genuinely mistaken. If, however, an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken.

6. Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence but, at the appropriate time, the whistleblower may be asked to come forward as a witness, and this will be discussed with them.

7. Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages staff to put their name to their allegation whenever possible.

The School will take all concerns raised seriously. However, concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the School. In exercising this 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 confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

8. How to Raise Concerns

In most cases you should be able to raise your concerns with your immediate manager or another manager. If, for some reason, this is not possible you should speak to the Head Teacher, the Bursar or the Assistant Bursar. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. You can also contact 'Public Concern at Work', a charitable body that provides free confidential advice regarding whistleblowing. Their website address is www.pcaw.org.uk or they can be contacted on 0207 404 6609

The earlier the concern is expressed the easier it is to take action. In order to assist with the investigation employees should provide as much detail and supporting evidence as possible regarding their concern. Although staff are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of the allegation, it will need to be demonstrated to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for concern for the person who raises them to have a reasonable belief that they exist.

The whistle blower may invite a recognised Trade Union representative or a work colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns raised.

9. Safeguarding concerns

If the concern involves a member of staff and a possible or potential child protection issue, you must inform the Head immediately. All other concerns about a child must be reported to the DSL.

10. How the School will Respond

If a concern is raised the School will look into it carefully and thoroughly. The person receiving the concern will ensure that a written account of it is made. This will help with the subsequent investigation by making sure that everyone involved is clear about what is being raised.

When a concern is raised, managers should undertake the following actions:

- Take the concern seriously
- Consider the concerns fully and objectively
- Recognise that raising a concern can be a difficult experience for employees
- Ensure confidentiality

11. Initial Enquiry

In order to protect the individuals, and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

The purpose of the initial enquiry is to ascertain if the conduct or behaviour involves a senior manager or a member of staff, so that further enquiries and investigation can be progressed accordingly.

Concerns or allegations raised which fall within the scope of established procedures will be referred for consideration under those procedures.

12. Investigation

A referral of a concern will be acknowledged within ten working days, with an indication of how the School proposes to deal with the matter and the likely timescale. If it is not possible to complete the initial enquiries within the ten working days, the letter of acknowledgement will explain. If a decision is made not to investigate, the reasons will be given.

The employee raising the concern with a manager, will, subject to legal constraints, be advised in writing of the outcome of the investigation and, where appropriate, what action is being taken. This may include changes to working practices to ensure that a similar situation does not occur again.

Written records of all interviews will be kept throughout the investigation together with written details of any action taken. The investigation will result in a written report and recommendations for corrective action, which will be passed to the manager responsible for deciding whether formal action shall be taken.

12. Monitoring Arrangements

Confidential records will be kept of all matters raised through the Whistleblowing Policy and the Governing Body will receive reports with an assessment of the effectiveness of the policy and any emerging patterns.

Josephine Boorman
Assistant Bursar

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