

Whistle-Blowing Policy

1. Introduction

At TAS, we are committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, and accountability. We expect all staff and stakeholders to maintain these standards. This policy provides a framework for reporting any malpractice or misconduct and ensures that concerns are dealt with effectively and responsibly.

2. Purpose of the Policy

This whistle-blowing policy is designed to:

- Encourage the reporting of concerns regarding unethical or unlawful behaviour.
- Ensure concerns are investigated thoroughly and fairly.
- Protect individuals who raise genuine concerns from victimisation or retaliation.
- Promote a culture of accountability, particularly in safeguarding vulnerable students.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all staff, governors, volunteers, parents, contractors, and other stakeholders of TAS. Concerns may include, but are not limited to:

- Misconduct related to the care or treatment of children, especially vulnerable SEN students.
- Safeguarding or child protection issues.
- Health and safety violations.
- Financial irregularities, fraud, or corruption.
- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination.
- Any criminal activity or legal violations.

4. Safeguarding and SEN Considerations

Given that TAS serves students with special educational needs, whistle-blowing concerns related to safeguarding must be treated with the utmost urgency. Staff must remain vigilant about the specific vulnerabilities of SEN students, including communication difficulties, behavioural challenges, or sensory impairments, which may make them more susceptible to abuse or neglect.

5. Whistle-Blowing vs. Grievance

This whistle-blowing policy is distinct from grievance procedures. Whistle-blowing concerns usually relate to the well-being of others (e.g., students, colleagues, the wider school community), whereas grievances are personal employment-related complaints. Staff should refer to the school's grievance procedures for personal employment issues.

6. How to Raise a Concern

If you have concerns about malpractice or misconduct, you are encouraged to raise these at an early stage. Concerns can be raised:

- Verbally or in writing to the CEO or Proprietress.
- If the concern involves the Headteacher or senior leadership, concerns should be reported directly to the SEN Case Officer.

Concerns should include sufficient detail to allow for investigation, such as the nature of the concern, key individuals involved, and any evidence.

7. Confidentiality and Anonymity

All concerns will be treated with strict confidentiality. However, anonymity may limit the school's ability to investigate the matter fully. You may request anonymity, but we encourage you to provide your contact details to allow for follow-up questions or clarifications.

8. Protection for Whistleblowers

TAS is committed to ensuring that no whistleblower suffers harassment, retaliation, or any adverse treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern, even if the concern is unfounded but raised in good faith. Any staff member found to have retaliated against a whistleblower will face disciplinary action.

9. False Allegations

If an individual knowingly makes a false or malicious allegation, this will be treated as a serious disciplinary offense and may result in appropriate sanctions.

10. Investigation of Concerns

Once a concern is raised, it will be acknowledged within [insert timeframe] days, and an appropriate investigation will be conducted. The investigation process may include:

- A review by senior staff or the governing body.
- An independent external investigation, if necessary.
- A safeguarding referral to local authorities or relevant bodies, in cases involving child protection issues.

The whistleblower will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation, subject to any legal or confidentiality restrictions.

11. Outcomes of the Investigation

At the conclusion of the investigation, the whistleblower will be informed of the outcome, where appropriate. This may include corrective action, disciplinary measures, or a report to external authorities such as Ofsted, local authorities, or the police.

12. Reporting Concerns Externally

While we encourage staff to report concerns internally, we recognise that, in certain circumstances, reporting to external agencies may be necessary. You may report to:

- Ofsted
- The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)
- The Department for Education (DfE)
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

However, please ensure that all internal avenues have been exhausted before taking this step, except in urgent safeguarding matters.

13. Monitoring and Review

The whistle-blowing policy will be reviewed annually by the school's leadership team and governing body to ensure its effectiveness. Any amendments will be communicated to all stakeholders.

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