

Whistleblowing Policy

Seven Springs Education



**Seven Springs
Education**

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1. Aims

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 organisation know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the organisation
- Set clear procedures for how the organisation will respond to such concerns
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistleblowing 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)

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 organisation in any capacity including freelancers or contractors who provide services on a personal basis.

2. Legislation

This policy has been written in line with [government guidance on whistleblowing](#). We also take into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

For more information about Whistleblowing and relevant legislation in the UK visit this [website](#).

3. Definition of whistleblowing

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

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Students' or staff members' 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
- Damage to the environment

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the organisation count as whistleblowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistleblowing. 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 whistleblowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- A free and confidential [advice line](#)

4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistleblowing concern

4.1 When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in section 3 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistleblowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or trust procedures, put staff or students in danger (this includes low-level safeguarding concerns and high-level safeguarding concerns) or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

4.2 Who to report to

Staff should report their concern to the Managing Director (alan@seven-springs.co.uk). If the concern is about the Managing Director or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to a member of the Senior Leadership Team who is independent of the issue, seeking guidance from [Protect](#) if needed.

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.

If staff do not feel able to report instances to members of Seven Springs Education or feel that their genuine safeguarding concerns are not being addressed, the NSPCC whistleblowing advice line is available. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 (the line is available 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk. Alternatively, staff can write to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London, EC2A 3NH.

5. Organisation procedure for responding to a whistleblowing concern

5.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the Senior Leadership Team - referred to from here as the 'recipient' - they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. 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 whistleblowing 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 Senior Leadership Team, 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 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.

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 Managing Director, Senior Leadership Team 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.

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 organisation will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

7. Escalating concerns beyond the organisation

Seven Springs Education 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. Where staff do not feel able to report instances to members of Seven Springs Education or feel that their genuine safeguarding concerns are not being addressed, the NSPCC whistleblowing advice line is available. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 (the line is available 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk. Alternatively, staff can write to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London, EC2A 3NH.

A list of other 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.

8. Record Keeping

We will hold records in line with our records retention schedule in our [Records Management, Retention and Disposal Policy](#).

The case manager of an allegation will maintain clear records about any case where the allegation or concern meets the criteria set out in Appendix 3 of the [Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy](#) and store them on the individual's confidential personnel file for the duration of the case.

The records of any allegation that, following an investigation, is found to be malicious or false will be deleted from the individual's personnel file (unless the individual consents for the records to be retained on the file).

For all other allegations (which are not found to be malicious or false), the following information will be kept on the file of the individual concerned:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- Details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
- Notes of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome
- A declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference

In these cases, we will provide a copy to the individual, in agreement with children's social care or the police as appropriate.

Where records contain information about allegations of sexual abuse, we will preserve these for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), for the term of the inquiry. We will retain all other records at least until the individual has reached normal pension age, or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

Please refer to the appendices of the [Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy](#) for further details:

- Appendix 2 sets out our policy on record-keeping specifically with respect to recruitment and pre-appointment checks
- Appendix 3 sets out our policy on record-keeping with respect to allegations of abuse made against staff

9. Approval

This policy will be reviewed every year.

These procedures have been agreed by the Senior Leadership Team, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

10. Links with other policies

- [Staff Grievance Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Procedure](#)
- [Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy](#)

You may view other policies on our [website](#).