



HOE VALLEY SCHOOL WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Person Responsible: Board of Governors
Date Adopted: September 2014
Date of last review: Summer 2022
Date of next review: Summer 2025

All policies complement the HVS vision which is to inspire a love of learning and reflect the four cornerstones of the school:

- To inspire a life-long love of learning, independent thought and the courage to think and act differently.
- For each student to receive a personalised learning experience tailored to their educational needs, abilities and ambitions, enabling them to achieve their highest academic potential, and to have the confidence to follow their aspirations.
- To develop a strong sense of responsibility to the community and to improve the quality of the local environment for its residents.
- To provide excellent pastoral care, by supporting every student in their learning career, with skilled mentoring to provide the best understanding of students' strengths, passions and purpose.

In order to implement our vision, we will:

- Create a community of independent, lifelong learners by effectively utilising the varied resources available to the benefit of all students and parents
- Offer a safe and happy environment for our learners
- Celebrate and reward success, fostering individuality and encouraging students to learn from one another as well as from their teachers and Teaching Assistants (TAs)
- Enable all staff to fulfil their roles effectively through continuous professional development or relevant training
- Strengthen links with our communities and partners and fully commit to joined up working as recommended by the Children and Families Act 2014
- Ensure high expectations of all students, in terms of aspirations, behaviour and attainment

1. INTRODUCTION

All at Hoe Valley School (HVS) are committed to achieving high standards and values in public service. The employees of HVS play a vital part in creating and maintaining an ethical climate at work and may often be the first to notice unacceptable behaviour or practice within the School

or the Board of Governors. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, they may find it would be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be suspicion of malpractice.

HVS and the Board of Governors are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, we encourage employees and others with significant concerns about any aspect of the School or Board of Governors' work to come forward and voice those concerns. We also recognise that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. This policy makes it clear that employees can raise concerns without fear of reprisals. It forms part of a wider strategy which describes how employees should conduct themselves at work, including the Professional Teacher Standards.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy is applicable to all HVS employees from the date of their appointment, including agency workers and trainees.

It aims to:

- encourage employees to feel confident in raising serious concerns, and to question and act upon those concerns;
- provide avenues for employees to raise concerns, and then receive feedback on any action taken;
- ensure that employees receive a response to their concerns, and that they are made aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied with the response;
- reassure employees that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation as long as they have a reasonable belief that they have made any disclosure in good faith.

Existing procedures are in place to enable employees to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment. This policy is intended to cover any significant concerns that an employee has about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of employees or members of the Board of Governors or others acting on behalf of the Board of Governors at HVS. It is intended that protection afforded under this policy is given where an employee raises concerns in the public interest and not for personal interest or gain.

This concern may be about something that relates to:

- improper conduct;
- anything unlawful;
- actions against established standards of practice;
- inappropriate action of the Board of Governors, including financial irregularities.

An employee's concerns about malpractice may in this context include concerns about:

- possible corruption;
- dangerous procedures risking health and safety;
- abuse of staff/students;
- evasion of statutory responsibilities;
- damage to the environment or other unethical or improper conduct.

The overriding concern should be that it would be in the public interest for the malpractice to be corrected and, if appropriate, sanctions applied.

3. PRINCIPLES

The Board of Governors assures employees that it recognises their right to raise concerns about any potential malpractice within the organisation. The Board of Governors is committed to dealing firmly with any form of victimisation, harassment or reprisal at work. If an allegation is made that any of these has occurred, an investigation will take place and, if the allegation is found to be substantiated, it will be considered a serious disciplinary offence and action will be taken accordingly.

For their part, employees have a right and also a duty to raise concerns when they have a reasonable belief that malpractice may be occurring or may have occurred.

Whenever possible, the Board of Governors will protect the identity of any employee who raises a concern and does not want his/her name to be disclosed. However, it must be understood that any investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by the person reporting the concern may be required as part of the evidence.

Concerns expressed anonymously will be considered at the discretion of the Board of Governors.

In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of obtaining the necessary further information.

The Board of Governors stresses that anyone who raises concerns in accordance with this policy must do so in good faith. If it is found that it has been used maliciously, this will be considered a disciplinary offence and action will be taken accordingly.

The Board of Governors will offer support to an employee who has raised a concern in accordance with this policy. The purpose of this support will be to ensure, where possible, that the employee concerned does not suffer (e.g. loss of status/income/conditions of employment) as a result of his/her action. In extreme circumstances, and in consultation with the employee, redeployment on a temporary or permanent basis may be considered, where appropriate.

4. HOW TO RAISE THE MATTER INITIALLY

Concerns should normally be raised initially with an appropriate level of line management (i.e. the immediate manager). However, the most appropriate person to contact will depend on the degree and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of malpractice. If the employee feels that it is inappropriate to contact his/her line manager, he/she should contact the Head Teacher, Deputy Head or Chair of Governors.

Concerns may be raised orally or in writing and it must be made clear that they are being raised under the Whistle blowing policy. Employees who wish to make a written report are invited to use the format: the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates); and the reason why he/she is particularly concerned about the situation.

It should be noted that often the earlier a concern is expressed the easier it is to take appropriate action.

Although an employee is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation that is made, it will be necessary to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for concern. Advice and guidance on any part of this policy can be obtained, in confidence, from the Chair of Governors, the Head Teacher or the Deputy Head.

If the employee wishes to raise his/her concern anonymously, he/she should make this clear to the person he/she chooses to contact.

The manager/Head Teacher approached by the employee may be able to take the appropriate steps to investigate the issue raised. Alternatively, he/she may refer the matter to another appropriate senior manager/the Chair of Governors.

Once the concern has been raised, the employee will be contacted within five working days by a senior manager/the Chair of Governors, who will arrange to discuss the matter. The employee may be accompanied by a friend or a trade union representative at this meeting for the purpose of providing support.

Following this discussion, an initial response will be given to the employee within five working days, indicating either the steps that are being taken to investigate the matter or the reasons why no further action is being taken. During the course of any investigation of the concerns, it may be necessary to contact the employee for assistance or clarification. He/she will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and notified of its resolution.

When the matter has been fully investigated and a conclusion reached, a response will be given to the individual who raised the concerns. As part of the school's response, the employee will be offered the opportunity to meet an alternative senior manager/member of the Board of Governors should he/she feels his/her concerns are unresolved.

5. HOW THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS RESPOND

Where appropriate, the matters raised will be investigated by management, the Responsible Officer (in all cases involving financial irregularity or corruption) or through disciplinary procedures; and/or be referred to the Police and/or form the subject of an independent enquiry.

In order to protect individuals and the Board of Governors, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures will be referred for consideration under the appropriate procedure (for example, child protection to the DSL and LADO if appropriate). In the event that the employee who has raised the concern is in a position with

his/her employment where managerial or procedural action is being taken against him/her, the Head Teacher will decide whether such action should be delayed, pending any further investigation.

It should be noted that some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. Equally, some issues may be investigated without the need for initial enquiries. If urgent action is required, this may be taken before any investigation is conducted - if there is sufficient initial evidence to indicate that such action is warranted, eg suspension of an employee while investigations are undertaken.

6. HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue for raising concerns with those responsible for the malpractice in question, ie the employer or the employer's agent. It is expected that this avenue will be followed by the employee initially. However, if an employee is dissatisfied with the Board of Governors' response he/she can raise the matter with any of the following, as appropriate:

- Any member of the Board of Governors
- The Police
- A relevant professional body or inspectorate (eg OFSTED, DfE)
- A trade union or professional association

It should be noted that an employee who approaches any external organisation does not breach the duty of confidence which is owed to the Board of Governors. The matter should be raised without confidential information being divulged (e.g. relating to students or other employees).

7. EXTERNAL PROCEDURES

It should be noted that under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where a member of staff may feel more comfortable raising a concern directly with an external body where the employee reasonably believes:-

- that exceptionally serious circumstances justify it
- that the school would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence
- where they believe they would be victimised by the school

Please ring:

Head Teacher; James Granville-Hamshar of St. John the Baptist School, Woking.
01483 729 343
NSPCC 0800 028 0285 National Whistleblowing Helpline

8. HOW THE POLICY WILL BE MONITORED

The Head Teacher and Board of Governors are responsible for registering the nature of all concerns raised under this Policy and for recording the outcome. The Head Teacher or Chair of Governors will produce an

annual report which identifies any patterns of concern and assesses the will produce an annual report which identifies any patterns of concern and assesses the effectiveness of this policy.