



Confidential Reporting Policy (Whistleblowing)

1. Purpose:

1.1. The policy aims to encourage staff and others to feel confident in raising serious concerns by providing clear avenues through which those concerns can be raised and reassuring staff who raise concerns that they will not be victimised if they have a reasonable belief and the disclosure was made in good faith.

1.2. The policy will ensure that staff and others who raise concerns receive a response and are informed about how their concerns are being dealt with.

2. Principles:

2.1 All employees at one time or another have concerns about what is happening at work. Usually these concerns are easily resolved. However, when they are about unlawful conduct, financial malpractice, health and safety risk to the public or to other employees, damage to the environment, possible fraud or corruption, sexual or physical abuse of colleagues or any other unethical conduct, it can be difficult to know what to do.

2.2 You may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to yourself, perhaps feeling it is none of your business or that it is only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to The Reach Free School. You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next. You may also fear that you could be harassed or victimised. The Reach Free School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. It expects its employees who have serious concerns about anything that is happening in The Reach Free School to come forward and raise those concerns.

2.3 The Reach Free School however recognises that employees need to be supported and have confidence that any concerns will be treated appropriately. The purpose of this policy, which is based on the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1988, is to enable you to raise your concerns about such malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. The Reach Free School would rather that you raised the matter when it is just a concern, rather than wait for proof.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy is intended to apply not only to employees but also to contractors working for The Reach Free School on its premises. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with The Reach Free School in their own premises.

3.2 This policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the organisation itself are at risk. If you have a concern about your employment with The Reach Free School this should be raised through the school's Grievance Policy.

4. Safeguards:

4.1. The Reach Free School is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees. The Reach Free School recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If you raise a genuine concern under this policy you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you are

providing a service.

4.2. The Reach Free School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

4.3 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence, or be influenced by, any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect you.

4.4 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness.

4.5 You should, whenever possible, put your name to your allegation, as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. The Reach Free School will exercise discretion in considering anonymous allegations if the issue raised is sufficiently serious – e.g. involving individual or public safety or corruption, waste or other impropriety- is credible and there is a likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

4.6 If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

5. How to Raise a Concern

5.1 It is normally expected that concerns will be raised in the first instance with your immediate line manager, Head of Department or relevant Assistant Headteacher. However, if the matter is of an extremely sensitive or serious nature, or you believe management to be involved, you should approach one of the following:

Anthony Smith	- Deputy Headteacher - Curriculum and Quality of Education
Martyn Essery	- Deputy Headteacher - School Improvement and Operations
Richard Booth	- Headteacher

These officers will also be able to provide you with advice and guidance on how to pursue matters of concern.

5.2 Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. If you wish to make a written report it is suggested that you include the background and history of the concern with relevant dates and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

5.3 You will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

5.4. You may be accompanied at any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised by your trade union or other representative.

6. How The Reach Free School will respond:

6.1 Once you have raised your concern, it will be looked into to assess, initially, what action should be taken.

6.2 As appropriate, matters raised may:

- Be investigated by management, the Responsible Officer, internal audit or through the disciplinary process
- Be referred to the Police
- Be referred to the external auditor

- Form the subject of an independent investigation

6.3 In deciding how to deal with the concern raised, the overriding principle which The Reach Free School will have in mind is the public interest. Concerns or allegations, which fall within the scope of the specific procedures e.g. child protection, will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

6.4 Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the person with whom you have raised the concern will write to you acknowledging that the concern has been received and indicating how The Reach Free School proposes to deal with the matter.

If there is an on-going investigation the person responsible for that investigation will provide you with updates on how the matter is progressing and inform you of the outcome of the investigation, subject to any legal constraints.

6.5 The Reach Free School will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings The Reach Free School will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure and any support and counselling you require.

7. The Responsible Officer

The Headteacher as the Responsible Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. That officer maintains a record of concerns raised, and the outcomes, in a form, which does not endanger your confidentiality, and will report as necessary to The Reach Free School. If the concern is about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will act as the Responsible Officer.

8. External Contacts

8.1 While The Reach Free School hopes this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise such matters internally, it recognises that there may be circumstances where you can properly report matters to outside bodies, such as the Police.

8.2 Your union or Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to advise you on such an option and on the circumstances in which you may be able to contact an outside body safely.

9. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored by the Governing Body for The Reach Free School and reviewed every three years.

10. Links with other policies

This policy has links with all policies produced by The Reach Free School

Created: January 2013
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Ratified by the Governing Body: October 2013
Date of Last Review: September 2022
Date of Next Review: September 2025

Change	Date	Change(s) Made	Change	EDI ¹
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History			Author	
V1.0		Policy created	NSI	
V1.1		Minor amendments to the policy to reflect changes in school procedures	RBO	
V1.2		Minor updates to the policy	RBO	
V1.3	Sept 22	Minor updates to the policy	RBO	Yes

¹ Any changes or revisions to the policy have considered equality, diversity and inclusion.