



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

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Definition of Whistleblowing:

Whistleblowing is the act of drawing public attention, or the attention of an authority figure, to perceived wrongdoing, misconduct, unethical activity within public, private or third-sector organisations. Corruption, fraud, bullying, health and safety violation, cover-ups and discrimination are common activities highlighted by whistleblowers.

1. Introduction & Purpose of Policy

The Marchant-Holliday School is committed to the highest possible standards of honesty, openness, and accountability. It seeks to conduct its affairs in a responsible manner, to ensure that all its activities are openly and effectively managed, and that the School's integrity and the principles of public interest disclosure are sustained.

In line with this commitment, we encourage employees and others with genuine concerns to come forward and voice those concerns. This policy makes it clear that members of staff can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination, or reprisals.

This policy aims to:

- Encourage members of staff to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice;
- Provide avenues to raise those concerns and receive timely feedback
- Ensure that staff receive a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to escalate them if they are not satisfied;
- Reassure staff that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith.

The Governing Body is mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and this policy will be applied fairly and consistently to all staff employed at the school as well as those carrying out work for the School. For example, Governing Body members, volunteers, agency workers, contractors or consultants. The term 'member(s) of staff' is used in this document for simplicity but is intended to include this broader range of individuals covered by this policy.

This procedure accords with the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and is compatible with the conventions contained in the Human Rights Act 1998.

2. Scope of the Policy

There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment. This policy is intended to cover serious concerns that may fall outside the remit of other procedures. These may include:

- Conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public, pupils or other staff
- Damage to the environment

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- Information relating to the above issues that has been, or is likely to be, deliberately concealed.

Any serious concerns that a member of staff has about any aspect of the School's provision, the conduct of staff or others connected with the School can be reported under this Whistleblowing Policy where that member of staff has a reasonable belief in the validity of those concerns and they relate to one of the specified areas set out above.

A member of staff who makes such a disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised, because he/she has made a disclosure.

3. Key Points: Raising Concerns

3.1 Safeguarding Against Harassment or Victimisation

It is recognised that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of fear of reprisal. The School will take a zero tolerance approach to any act of harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) resulting from a member of staff raising a concern in good faith, and will manage any such allegations.

A member of staff making an allegation within the scope of this policy will be supported by the School when raising a concern, providing that he/she:

- Believes the concern to be true
- Is acting in the best interests of the school
- Is not acting maliciously or making false allegations
- Is not seeking any personal gain

3.2 Unsubstantiated Allegations

If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however, an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action is likely to be taken.

3.3 Confidentiality

The School will do its best to protect the identity of anyone raising a concern. However, it must be appreciated that, in the interests of natural justice, any investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence.

3.4 Anonymous Allegations

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

4. How to Raise a Concern

As a first step, a member of staff should normally raise concerns with his/her immediate line manager, the Headteacher or a school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where this is appropriate to the nature of the concern. If the allegations involve the Headteacher, the member of staff should raise the matter with the Chair of the Governing Body.

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While the School encourages members of staff to raise their concerns internally, the School also recognises that some staff may feel unable to do this and that they may therefore wish to contact an independent, external organisation:

The [NSPCC's what you can do to report abuse dedicated helpline](#) is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled by their school or college. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 –the line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing, but the earlier the concern is expressed the easier it is to take any required action. Members of staff who wish to make a written report are encouraged to include the following information:

- The background and history of the concern, giving relevant dates and providing as much supporting evidence as possible;
- The reason(s) why they are particularly concerned about the situation.

Where a concern is raised verbally, the person hearing it must ensure that a written account of it is made to assist with any subsequent investigation. The SMT will take all concerns raised within the scope of this policy seriously and identify the appropriate level of investigation.

The whistleblower may invite a recognised trade union representative or a work colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews held in connection with the concerns raised

5. How the School Will Respond

5.1 Initial Enquiry

The school will respond by ensuring that they follow the guidance in [Part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education](#). In order to protect the individuals involved, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take and who should be appointed to conduct it. The overriding principle is that of the public interest. If urgent action is required, for example, if the safety or welfare of pupils may be at risk, this action will be taken before any investigation is conducted and we will follow the guidelines of Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership's [Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers](#). Further to the results of this enquiry, the following steps will be considered:

- Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures, will be referred for investigation and consideration under those procedures or
- an impartial investigator may be appointed

5.2 Communication

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the person who is dealing with the concern will respond in writing either to the member of staff directly. The response will:

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- Acknowledge receipt of the concern
- Indicate how the School proposes to deal with the matter
- Give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Advise whether any initial enquiries have been made
- Supply information on any staff support and
- Following investigation, advise whether further investigation or action is required, and if not, give clear reasoning.

5.3 Investigation

Once preliminary enquiries have established the need for an investigation, an appropriate person will be appointed to conduct the investigation (section 5.1). The person appointed to undertake the investigation is responsible for establishing the facts of the matter, as far as it is reasonably possible to do so, and assessing whether the concern has foundation and, where appropriate, can be resolved internally. Other people may need to be interviewed to provide further information and/or clarification concerning the issue(s) raised.

Written records of all interviews will be kept throughout the investigation together with details of any action taken. The investigation will result in a written report and recommendations for corrective action, which will be passed to the Headteacher and/or the Chair of the Governing Body, as appropriate to the concerns under consideration, to determine whether formal action shall be taken.

6. Monitoring & Reporting

The Governing Body of the School is responsible for overseeing the operation of this policy and for ensuring that appropriate records are maintained regarding concerns raised and the outcomes.

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