



RENAISSANCE EDUCATION
Specialist Therapeutic Schools



Whistleblowing Policy

Approved by: Jayson Rawlings

Date: September 2026

Last reviewed on: September 2026

Next review due by: September 2027

Contents

1. Aims	3
2. Legislation.....	3
3. Definition of whistle-blowing	4
3. Definition of whistle-blowing	4
4. Responsibilities	5
5. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern.....	6
6. School procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern.....	7
7. Malicious or vexatious allegations	8
8. Escalating concerns beyond the school	8
9. Contacting the media	8
10. Approval	8
11. Links with other policies	9

1. Aims

The Oaks School is committed to achieving the highest possible standards of probity and integrity regarding its practices. The school encourages employees to raise any concerns internally at the earliest opportunity rather than disregarding issues or raising the matter externally.

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 school know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the school
- ☐ Set clear procedures for how the school will respond to such concerns
- ☐ Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing 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)
- ☐ It is also intended to encourage and enable you to raise serious concerns **within** The Oaks School rather than ignoring a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.
- ☐ Provide reasonable support and protection for each employee who raises a concern.
- ☐ Protect an employee who raises a concern from detriment, harassment and victimization, recognising that certain cases it will be appropriate to consider concerns raised in a confidential or anonymous basis.

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 school in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

2. Legislation

This policy has been written to take account of the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#), which protects workers from making disclosures about certain matters of concern, when those disclosures are made in accordance with the Act's provisions and in the public interest.

The Act makes it unlawful for The Oaks School to dismiss anyone or allow them to be victimised on the basis that they have made an appropriate lawful disclosure in accordance with the Act. Rarely, a case might arise where it is the employee that has participated in the action causing concern. In such a case it is in the employee's interest to come into the open as soon as possible. The Oaks School cannot promise not to act against such an employee, but the fact that they came forward may be taken into account.

3. Definition of whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is “in the public interest”.

Examples of whistle-blowing include (but are not limited to):

- ☐ Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- ☐ Pupils’ or staff 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 whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the school 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 whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- ☐ A free and confidential [advice line](#)

3. Definition of whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is “in the public interest”.

Examples of whistleblowing include (but are not limited to):

- ☐ Conduct which is, has been, or is likely to be an offence or breach of law.
- ☐ Acts or potential acts of fraud/ corruption or the misuse of public funds or resources.
- ☐ Concerns of a safeguarding and/or child protection nature
- ☐ Unethical or unprofessional conduct that causes concern
- ☐ Past, current or likely health and safety risks
- ☐ Pupils’ or staff 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

- Malpractice which has or will occur in an examination or assessment which include, but is not limited to the following:
 - A security breach of the examination paper
 - Conduct of school staff which undermines the integrity of the examination
 - Unfair treatment of candidates by either giving an advantage to a candidate/group of candidates, or disadvantaging candidates by not providing the required access permitted
 - Possible fraud or corruption (e.g. accessing the exam paper prior to the exam)
 - Abuse of authority (e.g. the headteacher/SLT overriding JCQ regulations)
 - Other conduct which may be interpreted as malpractice.

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the school 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 whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- A free and confidential [advice line](#)

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Responsibilities of the Headteacher

- Foster a culture where employees and students can feel confident in raising concerns
- Ensure concerns are fully considered, investigated as necessary and action taken as appropriate
- Ensure employees and students raising concerns receive feedback on any action taken where appropriate
- Make employees aware of how they can take matters further if they are not satisfied

- Reassure employees that they will be protected against detriment and reprisal should they raise a concern
- Ensure a code of conduct for employees and students that establishes the highest standards as a proactive strategy to minimise concerns.

4.1 Responsibilities of the employee

- Raise legitimate concerns only where there is reasonable grounds/evidence for doing so
- Raise matters in good faith and not of a malicious / vexatious nature
- Engage with internal / external actions to address any concerns – by attending meetings an/ or participating in any investigation

5. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern

5.1 When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in section 3 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

5.2 Who to report to

Wherever possible, staff should initially raise their concerns with their line manager or the headteacher

Should the headteacher have concerns, these should be raised with the Executive Headteacher or the Proprietor.

If the concern is about the headteacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to Executive Headteacher.

5.3 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. This should also include any background information and why the employee feels concerned about the situation.

Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

This should also include that they wish for this concern to be addressed under the Whistleblowing Policy.

Should a verbal complaint be made by an employee, they may be asked to confirm this in writing.

An employee is not expected to prove beyond doubt the validity of their concern/s, however, they will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for their complaint

5.4 Trade union representation

Employees may wish to consult or seek guidance from the relative union representative before making a disclosure under this procedure.

Employees may be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

6. School procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern

6.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the line manager, or headteacher, they will :

- ☐ Acknowledge the concern raised in writing within 10 working days
- ☐ 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 whistle-blowing 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:
 - o The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the line manager/headteacher if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate such as the Executive Headteacher/Proprietor or other professional agency. In other cases, they may need to report the matter to the police

6.2 Outcome of the investigation

The Oaks School recognises that an employee raising a concern would wish to be assured that the matter has been fully addressed. Feedback will be provided on the outcome of the complaint, wherever possible as certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality

It may be possible to resolve some concerns informally by agreed action without the need for further formal investigation

Where this is not possible, the action taken by the school will depend on the nature of the concern and may include:

- ☐ Undertaking an internal management or disciplinary investigation
- ☐ Referral to the schools Board
- ☐ Referral to another regulatory authority
- ☐ Referral to the police
- ☐ Referral to the local authority.

Beyond the immediate actions, the headteacher, 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.

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

8. Escalating concerns beyond the school

The school encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 5 of this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of 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.

If a concern is raised externally, an employee should take all reasonable steps to ensure that confidentiality is maintained and confidential or privileged information is not disclosed.

9. Contacting the media

If an employee is considering contacting the media in any form, they are strongly advised to seek guidance from their Trade Union representative and where possible discuss the matter with the headteacher.

10. Approval

This policy will be reviewed every year.

These procedures have been reviewed by the People and Operations Manager, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- ☐ Staff discipline, conduct grievance policy
- ☐ Complaints procedure
- ☐ Child protection policy
- ☐ Low level concerns policy