



Donhead Preparatory School

Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction and scope

This policy is for all adults working at Donhead Preparatory School, including employees, governors, volunteers, supply staff, contractors, peripatetic staff and visiting professionals. It supports the School's safeguarding culture and should be read alongside the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Low-Level Concerns Policy, Allegations Against Staff procedures, Complaints Policy and Grievance procedures.

Staff have an individual responsibility to raise concerns about unsafe, unlawful, unethical or unacceptable practice, particularly where a child's welfare may be at risk. This policy reflects the expectations in the current version of Keeping Children Safe in Education and should be read and applied in line with the School's safeguarding procedures. Staff should act promptly and should never delay because they are unsure whether they are right.

Whistleblowing is not the same as a personal grievance or complaint. It is used where a member of staff has a genuine concern about wrongdoing, serious risk, unsafe practice, concealment of information, or the way safeguarding or child protection matters are being handled. Safeguarding concerns about a child should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL without delay; if a child is in immediate danger, staff should call 999.

A disclosure may qualify as a protected disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 where a worker reasonably believes that the disclosure is made in the public interest and tends to show relevant wrongdoing, such as a criminal offence, breach of legal obligation, miscarriage of justice, danger to health and safety, damage to the environment, or deliberate concealment of any of these matters.

Reasons for Whistleblowing

- To raise concerns about unacceptable, unsafe, unlawful or unethical practice or behaviour.
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To prevent staff, pupils or the School from being exposed to avoidable risk.

What Stops People from Whistleblowing

- Starting a chain of events which spirals
- Disrupting the work or project
- Fear of getting it wrong, repercussions or damaging careers
- Fear of not being believed

How to Raise a Concern

- Raise concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as possible. Early reporting helps the School act quickly and protect pupils, staff and the wider community.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why.
- In the first instance, raise the matter with your line manager, the Headteacher, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy DSL, as appropriate to the concern.

- If the concern relates to the Headteacher, or if you feel unable to raise the matter internally, contact the Chair of Governors using the contact details made available to staff by the School Office. Where the concern relates to safeguarding practice and you feel unable to raise it internally, contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line on 0800 028 0285. Where appropriate, staff may also contact external bodies such as the local authority designated officer, children's social care, the police, the Charity Commission, the Independent Schools Inspectorate or Protect for independent whistleblowing advice. Where a child may be at immediate risk, contact the police on 999 or local children's services without delay.
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest.
- Ideally, you should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places where you can.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.
- Concerns will be treated sensitively and confidentially as far as possible, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where the School has safeguarding, legal or regulatory duties to share information.
- Anonymous concerns will be considered, although it may be more difficult for the School to investigate fully or provide feedback if the person raising the concern cannot be contacted. Staff are therefore encouraged, wherever possible, to raise concerns openly or confidentially rather than anonymously.

What Happens Next

- The concern will be considered promptly and, where appropriate, investigated or referred to the relevant safeguarding, regulatory or statutory body.
- The person considering the concern will be sufficiently independent of the matter raised. Where there is a conflict of interest, the matter will be referred to another appropriate senior person, governor or external body.
- A written record will be kept of the concern, the action taken, any referrals made and the outcome, subject to confidentiality and data protection requirements.
- The School will protect staff from harassment, victimisation, detriment or dismissal because they have raised a concern reasonably or made a protected disclosure through appropriate channels.
- No action will be taken against a member of staff where a concern is raised honestly, reasonably and in good faith, even if it is not ultimately substantiated.
- Deliberately false or malicious allegations may be treated as a disciplinary matter.
- Staff should receive an appropriate response or update, although the School may not be able to share confidential details about pupils, staff members, investigations or disciplinary processes.

Self Reporting

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, including a physical or mental health matter, which they reasonably believe may affect their professional competence, judgement, suitability or ability to carry out their duties safely. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such matters with their line manager or the Headteacher so that appropriate professional and personal support can be considered. This requirement is not intended to discourage staff from seeking support or to suggest that a health condition will automatically raise a safeguarding concern. Such reporting will be treated sensitively, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where the welfare or safety of children may be affected or where the School has legal, safeguarding or regulatory duties to act.

Policy Review and Approval

Reviewed: September 2026

Next review: September 2027, or sooner if statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements or relevant employment legislation changes

