



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

June 2023

Reviewed by SMT	24 th May 2023
Endorsed by Audit & Risk Committee:	23 rd June 2023
Approved by Governing Body:	11 th July 2023
Next review (as above):	Summer 2026 (interim review Oct 2024)

A POLICY

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Collyer's is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability in keeping with its values of Inclusivity, Aspiration, Care and Individuality. In line with this commitment, we expect our staff, and anyone associated with the College who has concerns about any aspects of our practices to be able to voice these concerns without fear of reprisal.

2 Legislative framework

- 2.1 Whistleblowing law is located in the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998). The principles of openness and accountability which underpin legislation protecting whistleblowers are reflected in this policy and procedure. The College is also committed to ensuring compliance with the Bribery Act 2010.

3 Aims

- 3.1 The aim of this policy and procedure is to provide employees and workers (referred to collectively as 'workers' in this policy – see also paragraph 3) with a means for raising genuine concerns of suspected bribery, breaches of the law and other serious wrongdoings.
- 3.2 The College encourages workers to raise genuine concerns about suspected wrongdoing at the earliest practicable stage. This policy and procedure is intended to provide safeguards to enable members of staff to raise concerns about malpractice in connection with the College including assurance that disclosures will be dealt with consistently and fairly.
- 3.3 This policy and procedure also aims to encourage workers to raise genuine concerns through internal College procedures without fear of adverse repercussions against them. The law allows workers to raise such concerns externally and this policy informs workers how they can do so. However, a failure to raise a concern under this procedure may result in a disclosure losing its protected status under the law.
- 3.4 This policy and procedure also seeks to balance the need to allow a culture of openness against the need to protect other workers against vexatious allegations or allegations which are not well-founded.

4. Scope of this policy and procedure

- 4.1 Applicability: This policy applies to all employees of the College, including:
- Apprentices;
 - Workers which includes any casual workers; home-based casual workers;
 - Employees of subcontractors;
 - Agency workers, Volunteers;
 - Governors, Co-optees and Trustees.
- 4.2 The DfE have stated the difference between [whistleblowing and raising a grievance](#). Whistleblowing is where there is a concern about a danger or illegality that has a public interest aspect to it (e.g. because it threatens students, third parties or the public generally). A grievance is specific to a worker's employment position such as resolving a personal dispute in the workplace; complaints of this nature should follow the College Grievance Policy.

4.3 Specific Subject Matter

If, in the course of employment, a worker becomes aware of information which they reasonably believe tends to show one or more of the following, they must use this policy and procedure:

- That a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed;
- That an individual has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal or professional obligation to which they are subject;
- That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur;
- That the health or safety of any individual has been, is being, or is likely to be, endangered;
- That the environment, has been, is being, or is likely to be, damaged;
- That information tending to show any of the above, is being, or is likely to be, deliberately concealed.

4.4 **Students** at the College are also encouraged to raise genuine concerns about suspected wrongdoing by making a complaint to their tutor, or, if this is not appropriate, to the Vice Principal (Curriculum) or Deputy Principal. This policy and procedure, however, is designed for the use of workers of the College.

4.5 **A Governor** can raise any such concerns with the Director of Governance, or if they were the cause of the concern, with the Chair of the Governing Body.

5 Definitions: Protected disclosures

5.1 The law protects workers who, out of a sense of public duty, want to reveal suspected wrongdoing or malpractice.

5.2 The law allows workers to raise what it defines as a 'protected disclosure'. In order to be a protected disclosure, a disclosure must relate to a specific subject matter (See Section 4.3 above) and the disclosure must also be made in an appropriate way (See Section 5). A 'protected disclosure' must, in the reasonable belief of the worker making it, also be made in the public interest. A protected disclosure must consist of information and not merely be allegations of suspected malpractice.

6 Responsibilities

6.1 Governors

The Governing Body has the overriding responsibility for the character and mission of the College and ensuring that the financial, planning and other management controls applied by the College are appropriate.

6.2 Management

The College management has responsibility for the communication and promotion of the policy and its principles within the College and the prevention, detection and investigation of irregularities and their timely resolution.

6.3 All staff

All 'workers' have a role to play in ensuring that the College is adequately protected from wrongdoing. They are expected to observe the highest standards in ensuring adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures and practices. Staff are positively encouraged to raise any concerns they have that any wrongdoing might be taking place.

7 Monitoring

7.1 This policy will be reviewed on a three year cycle or as legislation requires.

7.2 The College will keep a record of all concerns raised under this policy and procedure (including cases where the College deems that there is no case to answer and therefore that

no action should be taken) and will report to the Audit & Risk Committee and Governing Body on an annual basis or sooner as appropriate.

8 Related policies

Anti-Fraud and Irregularity Policy

Conflicts of Interest Policy

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Equality and Diversity Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Employment policies including Change Management, Staff Disciplinary and Grievance Policy, etc.

Data Protection Policy

Freedom of Information: Publication Scheme

Sustainability Policy

Instruments and Articles

B PROCEDURE

1 Procedure for making a disclosure

- 1.1 Information which a worker reasonably believes tends to show one or more of the situations given in A 4.3 should promptly be disclosed to their line manager so that any appropriate action can be taken. In most instances the information should be shared with the worker's line manager. If it is inappropriate to make such a disclosure to their line manager, a worker can raise the issue with the most appropriate member of SMT.
- 1.2 If the disclosure relates to the Principal, a worker can raise the issue with the Director of Governance. In the event that the disclosure relates to the Director of Governance, a worker can raise the issue with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- 1.3 Where a disclosure about staff conduct is related to a potential safeguarding issue or may raise a Low Level Concern, the information should be shared with the Vice Principal (Pastoral) as Senior DSL, or the Principal. The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy provides procedures for making a Safeguarding Disclosure and raising a Low Level Concern. Where a staff member feels unable to raise a concern about safeguarding with the College as their employer or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels are open to them. General advice on whistleblowing can be found via: Advice on Whistleblowing or via the NSPCC (see 4.2). The NSPCC's [Whistleblowing Advice Line](#) 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 an issue is being handled by the College.
- 1.4 Workers are encouraged to identify themselves when making a disclosure. If an anonymous disclosure is made, the College will not be in a position to notify the individual making the disclosure of the outcome of action taken by the College. Anonymity also means that the College will have difficulty in investigating such a concern. The College reserves the right to determine whether to apply this procedure in respect of an anonymised disclosure in light of the following considerations:
 - The seriousness of the issues raised in the disclosure;
 - The credibility of the concern; and
 - How likely it is that the concern can be confirmed from attributable sources.
- 1.5 For further guidance in relation to this policy and procedure, or concerning the use of the disclosure procedure generally, employees should speak in confidence HR or the Director of Governance.

2 Procedure for investigation of a disclosure

- 2.1 When a worker makes a disclosure, the College will acknowledge its receipt, in writing, within a reasonable time.
- 2.2 The College will then determine whether or not it believes that the disclosure has substance or merit. If the College considers that the disclosure does not have sufficient merit to warrant further action, the worker will be notified in writing of the reasons for the College's decision and advised that no further action will be taken by the College under this policy and procedure. Considerations to be taken into account when making this determination may include the following:
 - If the College is satisfied that a worker does not have a reasonable belief that suspected malpractice is occurring; or
 - If the matter is already the subject of legal proceedings or appropriate action by an external body; or

- If the matter is already subject to another, appropriate College procedure.
- 2.3 When a worker makes a disclosure which has sufficient substance or merit warranting further action, the College will take action it deems appropriate (including action under any other applicable College policy or procedure). Possible actions could include internal investigation; referral to the College's auditors; or referral to relevant external bodies such as the police, Ofsted, Health and Safety Executive, funding bodies or the Information Commissioner's Office.
 - 2.4 If appropriate, any internal investigation would be conducted by an appropriate manager without any direct association with the individual to whom the disclosure relates, or by an external investigator appointed by the College as appropriate.
 - 2.5 Any recommendations for further action made by the College will be addressed to the Principal or Chair of the Governing Body as appropriate in the circumstances. The recipient will take all steps within their power to ensure the recommendations are implemented unless there are good reasons for not doing so.
 - 2.6 The worker making the disclosure will be notified of the outcome of any action taken by the College under this policy and procedure within a reasonable period of time. If the worker is not satisfied that their concern has been appropriately addressed, they can appeal against the outcome by raising the issue with the Principal or Chair of the Governing Body as appropriate within 5 working days. The Principal or Chair of the Governing Body will make a final decision on action to be taken and notify the worker making the disclosure.
 - 2.7 All communications with the worker making the disclosure will be in writing and sent to the worker's home address rather than through the College's internal mail. If investigations into the concern are prolonged, the College should keep the worker concerned updated as to the progress of the investigation and give an estimated timeframe for its conclusion.

3 Safeguards for workers making a disclosure

- 3.1 A worker making a disclosure under this procedure can expect their matter to be treated confidentially by the College and, where applicable, their name will not be disclosed to anyone implicated in the suspected wrongdoing, without their prior approval.
- 3.2 The College will take all reasonable steps to ensure that any report of recommendations, or other relevant documentation, produced by the College does not identify the worker making the disclosure without their written consent, or unless the College is legally obliged to do so, or for the purposes of seeking legal advice.
- 3.3 No formal disciplinary action will be taken against a worker on the grounds of making a disclosure made under this policy or procedure. This does not prevent the College from bringing disciplinary action against a worker where the College has grounds to believe that a disclosure was made maliciously or vexatiously, or where a disclosure is made outside the College without reasonable grounds.
- 3.4 A worker will not suffer dismissal or any detrimental action or omission of any type (including informal pressure or any form of victimisation) by the College for making a disclosure in accordance with this policy and procedure. Equally, where a worker is threatened, bullied, pressurised or victimised by a colleague for making a disclosure, disciplinary action will be taken by the College against the colleague in question.

4. Disclosure to external bodies (exceptional cases)

- 4.1 This policy and procedure has been implemented to allow workers to raise disclosures internally within the College. A worker has the right to make a disclosure outside of the College where there are reasonable grounds to do so and in accordance with the law.

- 4.2 Workers may make a disclosure to an appropriate external body prescribed by the law. This list of 'prescribed' organisations and bodies is available from Protect (formerly known as Public Concern at Work) Further information and contacts can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies>

Name of regulator	Contact details
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills	The Chief Inspector Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD Tel: 0300 123 3155 Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
Secretary of State for Education/Education and Skills Funding Agency	Ministerial and Public Communications Division Department for Education Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD Tel: 0370 000 2288 Website: www.gov.uk/contact-dfe
The Health and Safety Executive	Tel: 0300 003 1647 Online form: www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm

- 4.3 We encourage any individual to seek appropriate advice before reporting a concern to anyone externally. If a worker seeks advice outside of the College, they must be careful not to breach any confidentiality obligations or damage the College's reputation in so doing. Protect is a leading independent charity providing information and advice and a confidential hotline (see 6.3).

5. Accountability

- 5.1 The College will keep a record of all concerns raised under this policy and procedure (including cases where the College deems that there is no case to answer and therefore that no action should be taken) and will report to the Audit & Risk Committee and Governing Body on an annual basis (at the summer meeting) or sooner as appropriate.

6. Further assistance for workers

- 6.1 The College will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of workers who make disclosures. If, at any stage of this procedure a worker feels that they are being subject to informal

pressures, bullying or harassment due to making a disclosure, they should raise this matter, in writing, to the Principal or Director of Governance.

- 6.2 A worker making a disclosure may want to confidentially request counselling or other support from the College's occupational health service. Any such request for counselling or support services should be addressed to HR. Such a request would be made in confidence.
- 6.3 Protect (formerly known as Public Concern at Work) is a source of further information and advice at <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>. It also provides a free helpline offering confidential advice on 020 3117 2520.

Lead: Director of Governance