



Name of Policy: **WHISTLEBLOWING**

Date Approved: August 2022

Date for Review: August 2023

Policy Statement

The Royal British International School encourages open communication. It is imperative that any conduct believed to be inconsistent with our Policies as well as any unethical, unlawful or unsafe situations is reported.

The reporting of suspected wrongdoing is often called ‘whistleblowing’.

Whistleblowing has been defined as:

‘the disclosure by an employee or professional of confidential information which relates to some danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct connected with the work place, be it of the employee or his/her fellow employees’ (Public Concern at Work Guidelines 1997 UK).

The British context

In Britain, statutory protection for employees who whistle blow is provided by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (“PIDA”). The PIDA protects employees against victimisation if they make a protected disclosure within the meaning of the PIDA and speak out about concerns about conduct or practice within the school which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice.

This policy applies to all school staff including full and part time, casual, temporary or substitute staff and to individuals undertaking work experience in the school.

Aims and Scope of Policy

The Royal School Board is committed to high standards in all aspects of the school and will treat whistleblowing as a serious matter. In line with the School Board’s commitment to openness, probity and accountability, members of staff are encouraged to report concerns which will be taken seriously, investigated and appropriate action taken in response.

This policy aims to:

- ♣ give confidence to members of staff about raising concerns about conduct or practice which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice or is inconsistent with school standards and policies so that s/he is encouraged to act on those concerns;
- ♣ provide members of staff with avenues to raise concerns;
- ♣ ensure that members of staff receive a response to the concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken;
- ♣ offer assurance that members of staff are protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing action undertaken in good faith and within the meaning of the PIDA.

Some examples of wrongdoing are set out below (this is not an exhaustive list):

- ♣ Actions which endanger the health and safety of others or the environment
- ♣ Bribery or corruption
- ♣ Criminal activity
- ♣ Fraud or other financial irregularities
- ♣ Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements
- ♣ Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- ♣ Misuse of sensitive information
- ♣ Breach of The Royal School's internal policies and procedures
- ♣ Attempts to conceal any of the above

Confidentiality

If an individual raises a genuine concern through this Policy, the School will ensure they suffer no detriment. Provided they are acting in good faith, it does not matter whether or not the concern proves to be well founded.

A concern may be raised in confidence. Therefore, if an individual asks for their identity to be protected, it will not be disclosed without their consent. If a situation arises where it is not possible to deal with the concern without revealing their identity (for instance because evidence is needed in court), there will be a discussion as to whether and how we can proceed.

Any employee who victimises another because they have reasonably actioned this Policy will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure and their actions may constitute 'Gross Misconduct'.

Anonymous Allegations

Staff should put their name to allegations whenever possible; anonymous concerns are much less powerful. Nonetheless anonymous allegations will be considered under this whistleblowing procedure especially concerns raised which relate to the welfare of children. In relation to

determining whether an anonymous allegation will be taken forward The School Board will take the following factors into account:

- ♣ the seriousness of the issue raised;
- ♣ the credibility of the concern;
- ♣ the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources, and obtaining information provided.

Untrue and Malicious/Vexatious Allegations

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by further inquiry the matter will be closed and no further action taken. If, however, the inquiry shows that untrue allegations were malicious and/or vexatious or made for personal gain then The Royal School Board will consider taking further action against that individual.

How to Raise Your Concern

- ♣ If you have a concern about a wrongdoing, you should raise it in the first instance with your Line Manager either orally or in writing. It will help if you state the facts of the matter clearly. If you have a direct or personal interest in the matter, you should also tell us at this stage;
- ♣ If you cannot raise the issue with your Line Manager (perhaps because it involves him/her), you should escalate it to his/her Manager;
- ♣ When you have raised your concern, the Departmental Principal (with the support of DSL) will determine if it falls within the scope of this Policy. If not, you will be advised on how best to progress your concerns (e.g. by using the Grievance Procedure);
- ♣ If your concern does fall within the scope of this Policy, the person to whom you have reported the issue (or a suitable authorised person) will initially assess what action should be taken. You will be told who is handling the matter, how you can contact him/her and whether further assistance may be needed. Please be aware that the School may not be able to discuss details with you but will endeavour to keep you well apprised of progress;
- ♣ The Royal School cannot guarantee that all matters will be responded to in the way that you would like, but every reasonable effort will be made to handle the matter fairly and properly. If you are unhappy with the School's response, you can escalate your concern with The Royal School Board;
- ♣ If after an investigation, serious malpractice is identified, The Royal School School will take appropriate actions and, if deemed necessary, inform the appropriate external bodies.

Allegations Concerning Child Protection Issues

If a member of staff raises a concern related to a Child Protection issue, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should urgently be informed, so that the action for the handling of such allegations under the School's procedures can be initiated (see Safeguarding Policy).

The Media

Even when extreme circumstances are thought to exist, it will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to approach a commercial body or the media with details of the suspected wrongdoing. If you approach any such body and/or where your concern is disclosure for personal gain, The Royal School will consider this to be Gross Misconduct and immediate disciplinary action may be taken. This action should be discussed with the School Principal, or representative of the Board before it is given any serious consideration.

Timescale for Response

The person appointed by The Royal School Board to look into whistleblowing allegations will normally provide a written response within 5 working days (except in the case of anonymous allegations):

- ♣ acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- ♣ indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter;
- ♣ giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- ♣ advising whether any enquiries have been made;
- ♣ advising whether further enquiries will take place;
- ♣ informing you of support available whilst matters are looked into, and maintaining confidentiality wherever possible, but also explaining that it may not be possible that you can remain anonymous.

Guidance Note for Members of Staff

This guidance should be followed if you suspect any conduct or practice in any area of the school's activities which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice.

DO

- ♣ Make an immediate note of your concerns;
- ♣ Note all relevant details such as what was said in telephone or other conversations, the date, time and the names of any parties involved; or any action observed;
- ♣ Convey your suspicions to someone with the appropriate authority and experience e.g. your line manager, a member of the senior management team, the Principal;
- ♣ Deal with the matter promptly;
- ♣ Keep a copy of all notes/details etc;

- ♣ Ask for a copy of the School's whistleblowing policy if this has not routinely been made available to all school staff on the school website/ on the school server/ in the policy folder.

DO NOT

- ♣ Do nothing;
- ♣ Be afraid of raising your concerns. You will not suffer any recrimination as a result of voicing areasonably held suspicion. The School Principals and School Board will treat any matter you raise sensitively and confidentially wherever possible;
- ♣ Approach or accuse any individuals directly;
- ♣ Try to investigate the matter yourself. There are rules surrounding the gathering of evidence for use in criminal cases and in relation to child protection cases. Any attempt to gather evidence by people who are unfamiliar with these rules may destroy the case;
- ♣ Convey your suspicions to anyone other than those with the proper authority;
- ♣ If you wish to remain anonymous, do not include your name/ position or any other information which could lead to your identity being disclosed

Review

This policy will be reviewed on yearly basis by the School Leadership Team or every time there is a change in guidance, procedure or legislation.