



DANES HILL SCHOOL

STRONG & SAGACIOUS

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO THE MAIN SCHOOL, THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE
AND THE PRE-PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Author/Reviewer responsible:	Deputy Head Pastoral	Date of Review:	September 2023
Reviewed by:		Date of Authorisation:	
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1. Purpose of the Policy

Danes Hill School has adopted this policy and the accompanying procedure on whistleblowing to enable members of staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, a failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour or unethical conduct. The policy also provides, if necessary, for such concerns to be raised outside the organisation.

The School is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and expects all staff to maintain high standards. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur.

2. Aims

The School's policy on whistleblowing is intended to demonstrate that it:-

- will not tolerate malpractice;
- encourages all staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, as appropriate;
- respects the confidentiality of staff raising concerns and will provide procedures to maintain confidentiality so far as is consistent with progressing the issues effectively;
- will provide the opportunity to raise concerns outside of the normal line management structure where this is appropriate;
- will only invoke the School's disciplinary procedure in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations. The policy seeks to reassure staff that they can raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisal, even if they turn out to be mistaken; and
- will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all members of staff.

3. Scope of this policy

This procedure is separate from the School's procedure regarding grievances. Individuals should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise concerns relating to their own personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases, the School's Grievance Procedure should be used, as appropriate. If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this procedure you should first seek advice from the Head or the HR Director.

This procedure is to enable members of staff to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the School.

Malpractice is not easily defined; however, it includes allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to the staff code of ethics, criminal activities, or failing to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice, or creating or ignoring a serious risk to health, safety or the environment (negligence).

All staff must feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the School's safeguarding regime. More widely, it is important that wrongdoing, fraud or misconduct are confronted. Apparently minor incidents may escalate with serious consequences.

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to suspected malpractice within the School. A member of staff with any genuine concerns related to suspected malpractice affecting any of the School's activities (a whistleblowing concern) should report it under this procedure.

If staff and volunteers feel unable to raise an issue with the School or feel that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they may report their concerns to other whistleblowing channels, such as:

- Protect, an independent whistleblowing charity (helpline: 020 3117 2502, email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk, website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>).
- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline (tel: 0800 028 0285 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk).

4. Confidentiality

We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this procedure. However, if you wish to raise a concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know your identity, this will be discussed with you.

If there is evidence of criminal activity, the Police will in all cases be informed.

We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should discuss this with the Head or HR Director and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are set out above.

5. Raising a whistleblowing concern

We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. In some cases, they may refer the matter to the Head, Deputy or Director of Finance & Operations. All concerns about safeguarding/child protection related to other members of staff should be addressed to the Head.

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express your concerns out of a feeling that this may be disloyal to a colleague or you may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember it is often the most vulnerable children or young

person who is targeted. These children need us to safeguard their welfare.

Don't think, 'What if I'm wrong?' - think, 'What if I'm right?'

Where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your line manager has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you are at liberty to raise a whistleblowing concern to the Head, Deputy Head Pastoral or the HR Director directly. If you feel unable to approach the Head, the Deputy Head Pastoral or the HR Director directly, then the Chair of Governors should be the first point of contact.

A meeting will be arranged with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this procedure. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information as the concerns raised are investigated.

Any concern raised will be investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. You will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. Whenever possible and subject to third party rights, you will be informed of the resolution. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

If you are not satisfied that your concern is being properly dealt with, you will have a right to raise it in confidence with the Governing Body. Alternatively, you can follow the external procedure below.

6. External Procedures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in school. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

However, where all internal procedures have been exhausted, a member of staff shall have a right of access to an external prescribed person/body. This may include (depending on the subject matter of the disclosure) HMRC, the Audit Commission, the Health and Safety Executive and/or the Local Authority Designated Officer (where the disclosure relates to a child protection issue).

It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate for you to alert the media.

It should be noted that under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where a member of staff may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where the individual reasonably believes :-

- that exceptionally serious circumstances justify it;

- that the School would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence;
- where they believe they would be victimised by the School; or
- where the Secretary of State has ordered it.

A list of prescribed people and bodies can be accessed at:

[Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies)

A staff member should only tell a prescribed person or body if they think the employer:

- will cover it up;
- would treat them unfairly if they complained;
- has already been told and has failed or refused to address the matter appropriately.

Staff members who decide to blow the whistle to a prescribed person rather than within the school must make sure that they approach the most appropriate person or body for the issue. To assist with this decision, the list of prescribed persons linked above also provides a brief description about the matters that can be reported to each prescribed person or body.

We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern.

7. Malicious Accusations

False, malicious, vexatious or frivolous accusations will be dealt with under the School's Disciplinary Procedure.

8. Protection from Reprisal or Victimisation

It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

No member of staff will suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern, providing that they do so in good faith and following the Whistleblowing procedures. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Head, Deputy Head Pastoral or HR Director immediately. If the matter is not remedied, you may raise it formally using the School's Grievance Procedure.

You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action.

9. Contact Details

The Head

Maxine Shaw 01372 849286 mshaw@daneshill.surrey.sch.uk

The Designated Safeguarding Lead

Mr Ibe Akoh 01372 849289 iakoh@daneshill.surrey.sch.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

Mrs Maxine Shaw (Head) 01372 849286 mshaw@daneshill.surrey.sch.uk

Mrs Sonal Chatrath (Deputy Head Academic) 01372 849285

schatrath@daneshill.surrey.sch.uk

Miss Nikki Harris (Assistant Head Pastoral) 01372 849282 nharris@daneshill.surrey.sch.uk

Mrs Ruth Samson (Head of Pre-Prep Bevendean) 01372 849284

rsamson@daneshill.surrey.sch.uk

Mrs Georgie Smith 01372 842546 gsmith@daneshill.surrey.sch.uk

Governors

Chair of Governors for the School is Mrs Katy Cornish 01372 849287

kcornish@daneshillschool.com

Governor responsible for Safeguarding is Mr Dan Tiller 01372 849288

dtiller@daneshillschool.com

FURTHER ADVICE

In cases of children's welfare and safeguarding consult cspa@surreycc.gov.uk.

In terms of other whistleblowing issues, advice may be available from the governing body or local authority.

The government provides advice on whistleblowing at <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>.

The Department of Education guidance [The Prevent Duty](#) can be accessed via this link.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and Children's Social Care (CSC) Services

The LADO is responsible for co-ordinating the response on behalf of Surrey Local Authority to allegations of a safeguarding nature made against a member of School staff. Contact details for the Surrey Borough LADO are:

Phone: 0300 470 9100

Emergency out of hours phone: 01483 517898

Email: emails are dealt with during normal office hours

For concerns for a child or young person: cspa@surreycc.gov.uk

For concerns for an adult: ascmash@surreycc.gov.uk

SMS: 07527 182 861 (for the deaf or hard of hearing)

The LADO can also be contacted through this single point of access. Also, NSPCC Whistleblowing helpline 0800 028 0285 (8am to 8pm)

10. Related documents

- Staff code of conduct
- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Equal Opportunity and Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Public Concern at Work Code of Practice