WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Blundell's
PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Blundell's
FOUNDED 1604

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

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Spring 2023	External contacts updated. Protect details updated. Removal of reference to Child Protection.
Summer 2023	Senior and preparatory School Whistleblowing Policies amalgamated.
Autumn 2023	Reference to Bursar changed to Chief People Officer (CPO).
1st September 2024	Policy format updated. Policy amendments made in line with KCSiE 2024 and ISBA guidelines and template.
1st September 2025	Annual review following KCSIE 2025 review.
1st September 2026	Job title change from CPO to Director of People. Inclusion of sexual harassment as per ISBA recommendation. Other amendments to reflect KCSIE 2026.

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WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Introduction

1. Blundell's School and Blundell's Preparatory School (referred to as 'the School') have 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, safeguarding or child protection concerns, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour or unethical conduct or sexual harassment. The policy also provides for such concerns to be raised outside the organisation, if necessary.

Aim

2. The School is committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity and we expect all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with our Staff Behaviour Policy, Code of Conduct, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Low-Level Concerns Policy. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or the risk 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 if they do occur.

3. The School's policy on Whistleblowing is intended to demonstrate that the School :-

    a) Will not tolerate malpractice;

    b) Encourages staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, as appropriate;

    c) Respects the confidentiality of staff raising concerns and will provide procedures to maintain confidentiality so far as is consistent with progressing the issues effectively;

    d) Will provide the opportunity to raise concerns outside of the normal line management structure where this is appropriate;

    e) Will invoke the School's disciplinary policy and procedure in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations. The policy seeks to reassure staff that genuine concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal, even if they turn out to be mistaken;

    f) Will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is

accessible to all members of staff.

Scope of this Policy

4. This procedure is separate from the School's adopted procedures regarding grievances. Staff should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise concerns relating to their personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases, the Grievance Procedure or Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy should be used, as appropriate. Where a personal concern also raises a safeguarding, child protection, conduct, culture or wider public interest issue, staff should seek advice from the Head or Director of People so that the correct procedure can be identified and any safeguarding action is not delayed.

5. This procedure has been implemented to enable staff to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the School.

What is Whistleblowing?

6. Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing, malpractice or dangers at work. "Malpractice" is not easily defined; however, it includes allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, sexual harassment, safeguarding or child protection failures, unsafe practice, abuse of position or trust, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to the staff code of ethics, criminal activities, 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).

7. A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to suspected malpractice within the School. If staff, volunteers, governors, contractors or other adults working in or for the School have any genuine concerns related to suspected malpractice affecting any of the School's activities (a whistleblowing concern), you should report it under this procedure.

8. 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 use other whistleblowing channels, such as:

    a) Protect. An independent and confidential whistleblowing charity. Website: https://protect-advice.org.uk/. Tel: 020 3117 2502. Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk.

    b) The NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline. Tel: 0800 028 0285. Email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

9. Nothing in this policy prevents or delays any member of staff, volunteer, governor, contractor or other adult working in or for the School from following the School's

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy where a child is at risk of harm. Safeguarding and child protection concerns must be reported immediately in accordance with the safeguarding procedures, including to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or, where appropriate, to the Local Authority Designated Officer, children's social care, the Police or another relevant statutory agency.

Confidentiality

10. 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.

11. If there is evidence of criminal activity the School will consider whether referral to the Police or another appropriate statutory agency is required, taking account of its safeguarding obligations and any applicable statutory guidance.

12. We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. However, 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, Head Master or Director of People and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from the Protect Whistleblowing Charity, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are set out above.

Raising a Whistleblowing Concern

13. We hope that in most cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager. Concerns can be raised in person or in writing if preferred. It may be possible to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. In some cases this may not be possible and the matter may need to be referred to the Head, Headmaster or Director of People.

14. However, where the matter is more serious, involves a safeguarding or child protection concern, 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 with the Head directly. If you feel unable to approach the Head directly, then the Chair of Governors should be the first point of contact.

15. Where the concern relates to the Head, staff should raise the matter with the Chair of Governors. Where the concern relates to the Chair of Governors or another governor,

staff should seek advice from the Director of People, the Clerk to the Governors, the Local Authority Designated Officer or another appropriate external body, depending on the nature of the concern.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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 Governors. Alternatively, you can follow the external procedure below.

19. Concerns about the conduct of adults working with children, including allegations that a person may have behaved in a way that has harmed a child, may have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, may have behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, may have behaved or may behave in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children, or may have committed sexual harassment, should be referred in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and relevant statutory guidance.

External Procedures

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

21. However, if all internal procedures have been exhausted, or where the nature or urgency of the concern makes an external referral necessary, you shall have a right of access to an external person/body. This may include (depending on the subject matter of the disclosure) HMRC, the Health and Safety Executive, the Local Authority Designated Officer where the disclosure relates to a safeguarding or child protection issue, children's social care, the Police, the Disclosure and Barring Service, Ofsted, the Independent Schools Inspectorate or the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline. It will very

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

22. It should be noted that under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where you may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where you reasonably believe :

    a) that exceptionally serious circumstances justify it;

    b) that the School would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence;

    c) that you would be victimised by the School; or

    d) where the Secretary of State has ordered it.

23. Whatever the circumstances, we strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone externally. As outlined above, advice can be sought from:

    a) Protect. An independent and confidential whistleblowing charity. Website: https://protect-advice.org.uk/. Tel: 020 3117 2502. Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk.

    b) The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline. Tel: 0800 028 0285. Email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Malicious Accusations

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

Protection from Reprisal or Victimisation

25. It is understandable that staff are sometimes worried about possible repercussions as a result of raising a whistleblowing disclosure. We aim to encourage openness and will support you if you raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if you turn out to be mistaken.

26. No member of staff will suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern, provided that they do so in good faith and follow the whistleblowing procedures. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Head, Headmaster or Director of People immediately. If the matter is not remedied, you may raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.

27. Whistleblowers must not be threatened or subject to retaliation in any way. If you are involved in such conduct, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

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