



**THE
WHITE
HOUSE
SCHOOL**

Whistle-blowing Policy

Author of policy and position of responsibility: Elle Vinall, Headteacher	Date policy finalised: September 2024
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1. Context

The White House School is an Independent Specialist school. We are part of an ethical and progressive organisation that believes it can achieve real change for pupils and their families.

The White House School is situated within BCP local authority and offers a specialist learning provision which emphasises the development of core academic understanding, encourages creativity, celebrates outdoor learning and promotes the growth of essential life skills. We aim to establish a safe, creative and vibrant environment where children feel challenged and supported in their learning, achieving high levels of wellbeing and academic success. We aim to nurture and develop mutual respect, tolerance, teamwork, perseverance, kindness and good manners.

We adhere to the values of ARC:

- Ambition
- Resilience
- Community

The White House School operates within the SPELL framework. SPELL is The National Autistic Society's framework for understanding and responding to the needs of children and adults on the autism spectrum. It focuses on five principles that have been identified as vital elements of best practice in autism and emphasises ways to change the environment and our approaches to meet the specific needs of each person.

SPELL stands for Structure, Positive approaches and expectations, Empathy, Low arousal and Links:

Structure	Structure makes the world a more predictable, accessible and safer place. We can support people on the autism spectrum in creating structured environments using visual information.
Positive (approaches and expectations)	We must seek to establish and reinforce self-confidence and self-esteem by building on natural strengths, interest and abilities.

Empathy	We must try to see the world from the standpoint of the autistic child or adult, knowing what it is that motivates or interests them but importantly what may also frighten, preoccupy or otherwise distress them.
Low arousal	Approaches and the environment need to be calm and ordered in such a way so as to reduce anxiety and aid concentration.
Links	Autistic people, their parents or advocates should be seen as partners. Open links and communication will reduce the risk of misunderstanding, confusion or the adoption of fragmented, piecemeal approaches.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and that their confidentiality will be respected.
- Let all staff in the school know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the school.
- Set clear procedures for how the school will respond to such concerns.
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing concern.
- Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue).

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the school in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

3. Legislation

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as [government guidance on whistle-blowing](#). We also take into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

4. Definition of whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistle-blowing include (but are not limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staff health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

- Damage to the environment

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the school count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistle-blowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

When staff have a concern, they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- [Further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- A free and confidential [advice line](#)

5. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern

5.1 When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in section 4 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

5.2 Who to report to

Staff should report their concern to the Headteacher. If the concern is about the Headteacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Chief Operating Officer of the School Board – David Farley.

5.3 How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

6. School procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern

6.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the Headteacher - referred to from here as the 'recipient' - they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative.
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting and record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure.
- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken (see section 7 of this policy).
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:
 - The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the senior leadership team and/or school board, if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in

an external, independent body to investigate. In other cases, they may need to report the matter to the police.

- The person who raised the concern should be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps.

6.2 Outcome of the investigation

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified, and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the Headteacher, board members and other staff, if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

7. Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

8. Escalating concerns beyond the school

It should only be in exceptional circumstances that it should be necessary for an Employee to raise a concern externally. The school encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 5 of this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#).

The Protect advice line, linked to in section 4 of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Headteacher.

These procedures have been agreed by the School Board, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

10. Links with other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Made Against Staff Policy

- Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- Staff Grievance Policy
- Staff Handbook