



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Audience | All Staff/Governors |
| Date of renewal / updates / review | Academic Year |
| Named person responsible for monitoring | Head |
| Agreed by Site & Finance | 26 January 2016 |
| Agreed by Governing Body | 8 February 2016 |

Introduction

The staff and governors of Hampstead School seek to run all aspects of school business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct, integrity and to Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The school encourages a culture of trust and openness in all its dealings between staff and all people with whom it comes into contact. Effective and honest communication is essential if malpractice is to be effectively dealt with. The policy sets out how to raise issues or concerns in confidence.

The school recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive. Our policy allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the school but also allows recourse to an external party should that be necessary.

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is a common phrase used when someone makes a protected disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

The types of activity or behaviour which Hampstead School considers should be dealt with under this policy include:

- Criminal activity, e.g. theft, fraud, bribery, child abuse
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutes, e.g. disregarding tendering processes
- Dangers to health & safety
- Dangers to the environment, e.g. inappropriate use of chemicals
- Improper conduct, corruption or unethical behaviour such as acceptance of gifts/hospitality
- Waste or frivolous expenditure
- Attempts to conceal any of these

The provisions of this policy do not apply to more general matters or grievances which from staff would be dealt with through the school's Grievance Policy and for others through our Complaints Procedure.

How to raise a concern

Hampstead School encourages you to raise the matter internally in the first instance to allow those school staff and governors in positions of responsibility and authority

the opportunity to right the wrong and give an explanation for the behaviour or activity.

Internal school contacts:

Jacques Szemalikowski Head
020 7794 8133

Anne Clarke Joint Chair of Governors

Sarah Milner Joint Chair of Governors

However, your approach will depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues and who you believe to be involved in the alleged malpractice. For example, if you believe that the Head or the Governors are involved, you may wish to alert someone outside the school organisation.

Expolink is the impartial external organisation contracted by Camden Council to provide a confidential 'protected disclosure' service.

External contact:

Expolink 0800 374199 admin@expolink.co.uk

Will it be protected?

Hampstead School and Camden Council recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. This may be because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice.

The school and Camden Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation (including informal pressure) and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern and you:

- make the disclosure in good faith
- reasonably believe that the information is substantially true, and
- reasonably believe you are making the disclosure using the correct procedure.

In making a disclosure, you should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information.

You should always raise concerns through the contacts described in this policy. Any disclosure made to an external organisation (other than Expolink) will not be 'protected'.

The school acknowledges that there may be circumstances where you raise an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by an investigation. If this were the case, no action would be taken. If, however, you make malicious or vexatious allegations, and particularly if you persist with making them, disciplinary action may be taken.

Will it be confidential?

When you raise a concern but do not want your name to be disclosed, Hampstead School (or Camden Council if you have referred the matter to Expolink) will do its best to protect your identity. However, if we feel that a formal investigation process may be necessary, we may require a statement by you to form part of the evidence, otherwise we might not be able to proceed with further action.

One of the aims of this policy is to encourage you to put your name, with confidence, to any allegation whenever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much

less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of the school or Camden Council.

When considering anonymous allegations, a number of factors will be taken into account and may include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

Confidential Legal Advice

You can contact the charity Public Concern at Work for information and advice. This charity offers free legal advice in certain circumstances to people concerned about serious malpractice at work. Their literature states that matters are handled in strict confidence and without obligation. Contact details:

Public Concern at Work 020 7404 6609 <http://www.pcaw.org.uk/>

How concerns are dealt with

If reported to Hampstead School, the school will take the appropriate steps to investigate the allegations. If reported to Expolink, they will report the allegation to nominated officers within the Council, usually within the Internal Audit or Human Resources Service. These officers will treat this information confidentially and will take appropriate action to investigate the allegations made.

The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern. We will make initial enquiries to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. If an allegation or concern falls within the scope of other specific procedures it will be referred for consideration under those procedures, e.g. the complaints, disciplinary or grievance procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation commences, e.g. for health and safety issues.

Where the concern/allegation is raised internally, we will keep you advised of progress. If you have not provided your name, you will be given the opportunity to contact Expolink for an update. However, please note that we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take where this would infringe a duty of confidentiality owed by us to someone else.

Conclusion

Hampstead School has in place detailed systems of internal control, both financial and non-financial, and the external regulatory environment in which the school operates, keeps opportunity for fraud or impropriety to a minimum.

However the school recognises the importance of remaining vigilant and this policy is a public commitment that concerns about malpractice will be taken seriously and acted upon.

Signed: _____
(Chair of Governors)

Date: _____