TOLWORTH SCHOOL
Happy children, successful learners

*Tolworth School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.*

# Whistle Blowing Policy

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| Governors' Committee Responsible<br>Delegated to | Finance, Premises & Personnel<br>Headteacher (Rachel Nye) |
| Status | Statutory |
| Review Cycle | Annual |
| Date of last update | September 2025 |
| Date of next review | September 2026 |

**Introduction**

Tolworth School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. We encourage employees and others working with us to raise any concerns about any aspect of our work and to come forward and voice those concerns. In some instances, concerns may need to be expressed on a confidential basis.

This procedure supports the Public Interest Disclosure Act and encourages employees to raise serious concerns, without fear of reprisal or victimisation, rather than overlooking a problem or raising the matter outside. This policy applies to all employees, agency workers, suppliers and those contractors working on our premises.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with key policies such as Financial Procedures, Health and Safety and Safeguarding and Child Protection. It aims to ensure individuals are:

- encouraged to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice;
- provided with avenues to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- given a response to their concerns and are aware of how to pursue them if not satisfied; and
- reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief any disclosure has been made in good faith.

There are existing procedures in place to enable individuals to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment including issues relating to bullying. This procedure is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include serious concerns about:

- conduct which is, has been or is likely to be an offence or breach of law;
- conduct that has occurred, is occurring or is likely occur, as a result of which we fail to comply with a legal obligation. For example unauthorised use of public funds, possible fraud and corruption, sexual or physical abuse of clients, or other unethical conduct discrimination of any kind and waste/frivolous expenditure; including concerns about staff or volunteers who may have behaved in a way that may have harmed a child, committed an offence against a child or behaved in a way that may pose a risk to a child.
- disclosures related to past, current or likely miscarriages of justice;
- past, current or likely health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees (see below); and
- past, current or likely damage to the environment.

Concerns about any aspect of provision can be reported;

- this may be about something that you feel uncomfortable about in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe we subscribe to;
- is against our financial regulations and policies;
- falls below established standards of practice;
- or amounts to improper conduct.

Complaints or concerns about Health and Safety should be addressed to the Headteacher. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time. The Governing Body has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.

The Headteacher has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, and must ensure that all managers and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training. The Headteacher, in conjunction with the Governing Body, should review this policy from a legal and operational perspective at least once a year.

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved. Comments, suggestions and queries should be addressed to the Headteacher or the Governing Body.

**Confidentiality**
All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if this is your wish. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if you are required to come forward as a witness.

**Anonymous allegations**
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 come forward to the Headteacher or one of the other contact points listed at the end of this policy and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at our discretion. In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

**Untrue allegations**
If you make an allegation in good faith that is not subsequently confirmed by an investigation, no action will usually be taken. Disciplinary action may be taken against individuals who knowingly make false, malicious or vexatious allegations.

**How to raise a concern**
Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing. A concern raised in writing should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible and state the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation. The earlier a concern is raised the easier it is to take action. A trade union or professional association may raise a matter on behalf of an employee.

When a concern is raised verbally, a note of the meeting will be taken which all parties must sign as representing a true record of the meeting including details of the concern raised.

If the concern is due to safeguarding and/or child protection, the school policy on Safeguarding and Child Protection can be accessed via the school website.

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

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party. In some circumstances the law will protect you if you raise the matter with the third party directly. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact your line manager or the Headteacher for guidance.

**Step One - *Raising a Concern***

Whenever possible you should raise your concern with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors. The Headteacher must be notified of all financial or accounting irregularities

**Step Two - *How we will respond***

- The action we take will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may be investigated internally by the Headteacher and/or the Chair of Governors through the disciplinary or other internal process or be referred to the police or an external auditor.
- In order to protect individuals, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g., child protection, discrimination issues or criminal activity) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, it will be taken before any investigation is conducted.
- Within 10 working days, the responsible person will write to you:
    - acknowledging that the concern has been received;
    - indicating how we propose to deal with the matter;
    - giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
    - informing you if any initial enquiries have been made; and
    - whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

**Contact**

The amount of contact between the people considering the issues and you will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought.

**Attending meetings**

When any meeting is arranged you have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a workplace colleague who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

**Support**

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.

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.

We will take steps to minimise any difficulties you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, we will advise or arrange for you to have advice about the procedure. We will not tolerate harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take action to protect individuals who raise a genuine concern under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

We accept that you need to be assured that concerns will be properly addressed and, subject to legal constraints, will provide information about the outcomes of any investigations.

**Independent Advice**

If you would like independent advice about raising a concern, you can talk to:

- Your union
- An independent legal advisor
- The Independent Charity, **Public Concern at Work**, telephone number: 020 7404 6609. Their lawyers can give you free confidential advice on how to raise a concern about serious wrongdoing at work.

**How the matter can be taken further**

This procedure is intended to provide individuals with an avenue to raise concerns within the school. If you are not satisfied, and feel it is right to take the matter further, the following are possible contact points:

- Education Funding Agency
- National Audit Office
- The Health & Safety Executive
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- The Environment Agency
- The Local Authority
- The police

If a matter is taken outside the school, you must take all reasonable steps to ensure that confidential or privileged information is not disclosed. If in doubt, check with the contacts listed above.

**Public interest disclosure**

The Public Interest Disclosure Act provides workers with protection from dismissal or other damage as a result of making a disclosure of information in the public interest about wrong doing at work. Such disclosures are protected if they are done according to the Act's provisions and the Act's protection is strongest where workers raise matters with their employers. Therefore whistleblowing to an external source without first going through the internal procedure is inadvisable without compelling reasons. These may include the involvement of senior managers or directors, serious health and safety issues or discrimination.

**Public Concern at Work –** 020 7404 6609
**http://www.pcaw.org.uk/**

**If you have a safeguarding concern about a member of staff please refer to the Safeguarding Policy.**