



## COMPLAINTS – WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Reviewed by (School Business Manager).....

Approved by the Board of Trustees (Chair):.....

Date:.....

Review Date:.....

Page Left Blank Intentionally

# COMPLAINTS - WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

## Introduction

Whistleblowing is defined as the reporting of a concern that something is happening within Bristol Steiner School that should not be, or not happening that should be, which may include wrongdoing, or relate to the way in which the organisation is run. Wrongdoing includes misconduct on all levels, from minor to serious acts.

Bristol Steiner School is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability. To achieve this, the school encourages the raising of concerns and for individuals to speak out against wrongdoing. A culture where individuals feel confident in being able to raise concerns is one where the highest standards of performance can be achieved.

The **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998** puts whistleblowing on a statutory basis and gives protection against victimisation or dismissal for workers who blow the whistle on criminal behaviour or other wrongdoing (as defined in the Act).

## General Principles

1. Bristol Steiner School recognises that raising a concern may be a daunting and difficult experience, therefore support and advice will be provided.
2. The school maintains that an individual raising a concern in 'good faith' is acting responsibly and appropriately, even if the concern turns out to be a misunderstanding or otherwise groundless.
3. Concerns will be treated in confidence in as far as this is possible and the school will make every effort to protect the anonymity of the person raising a concern, if requested. In circumstances where this may not be possible, the individual will be contacted to discuss the available options and offered support.
4. All concerns raised under the policy will be taken seriously and investigated.
5. If wrongdoing is discovered as a result of an investigation, the Disciplinary Procedure will apply, in addition to any appropriate external measures.
6. Victimisation of any individual raising a concern, or attempts to prevent such concerns from being raised, will not be tolerated and is in itself a disciplinary offence.
7. When statements are made maliciously, action under the Disciplinary procedure may be taken against the staff member.

## Aims and Scope of Policy

The aim of this policy is to encourage individuals to raise concerns about any wrongdoing that they know about, or suspect is happening in the school. The policy sets out the way in which concerns can be raised and how these concerns will be dealt with.

## **Type of incident or behaviour covered**

The following list covers the type of concerns that may be raised under the Whistleblowing Policy and is not intended to be exclusive or exhaustive list.

- Misconduct involving a child
- Performance/conduct that puts at risk the safety of a child.
- Performance/conduct which puts at risk the school's reputation as a provider of education.
- Inappropriate/sexual relationships between a member of staff in a position of trust and a student.
- Inappropriate conduct or unethical behaviour.
- Performance or conduct that gives cause for concern.
- Negligent conduct or performance.
- Witnessing harassment or bullying of others.
- Abuse or misuse of the school's property (including computer systems, computer software/hardware, email and the internet).
- A criminal offence.
- Fraud/financial irregularity.
- Danger to health and safety.
- A deliberate attempt to cover up information of any of the above.

## **Confidentiality**

All concerns will be treated in confidence in as far as this is possible and the school will endeavour to protect the identity of the person raising a concern, if s/he does not want their name to be disclosed. Where this is not possible, the person raising the concern will be contacted to discuss the matter and offered full and continuing support.

## **Anonymity**

There may be occasions where an individual only feels comfortable raising a concern anonymously and the school will always take such concerns seriously. However, anonymous concerns make investigation difficult. Also it can be difficult to assess the extent to which the matter has been raised in 'good faith'. Therefore, there may be instances where the school, having seriously considered the concern and taken all information available into account, may not be able to pursue an anonymous concern.

This policy, therefore, encourages individuals to disclose their identity to those who need to know it; this ensures a thorough investigation and that the matter is dealt with appropriately. It also enables feedback to be provided.

## Procedure

### Who to inform

Most organisations would direct staff to their line manager to report concerns or incidents. As a Steiner school, this is not possible due to the flat collegial structure of the school. The recommendation therefore, depending on the nature of the concern, to raise the issue in one of the following ways:

- With one of the schools child protection officers – if the concern relates to any area of safeguarding/child welfare etc.
- The Education Manager (or Chair of College) – if the concern relates to teaching practice or unprofessional behaviour.
- A Trustee of the school – if the concern relates to employment issues.
- The School Business Manager – if the concern relates to a H&S issue.
- The School Business Manager – if the concern relates to any financial issues.
- The company secretary (generally the finance officer) – if the concern relates to one of the Trustees of the school.
- If none of the above are appropriate or a staff member feels unable to approach any of the above, then they should raise their concern with someone they trust within the organisation.

### Response to a concern

The person approached initially with the concern is then responsible for reporting the concern to the Senior Management Team; no details of the concern will be given at this point, only that a concern has been raised and referred with the agreement of the individual raising the concern. Two members of the Senior Management Team will be mandated to deal with the issue, this may or may not include the person initially reported to.

The mandated group will contact the individual who has raised the concern within 7 working days of receipt, informing them of the following:

- That the concern has been received.
- Whether any initial enquiries have been made.
- How the matter will be investigated.
- An estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response.
- A point of contact for support during an investigation and information on the sources of support and advice available.

### Investigation Process

An initial assessment will be made as to whether alternative working arrangements are required during the investigation. For instance it may be necessary to suspend a member of staff for their own protection.

The investigators will then meet with the individual who has raised the concern to find out all the facts and clarify any details.

An investigation will also involve meeting with the individual that the concern has been brought against (if applicable) and any witnesses.

The right to be accompanied at meetings will apply to both parties. This may be a union representative or a colleague.

Throughout the investigation both parties will be kept informed of progress, including any difficulties in completing the process within the timescale given.

### **Conclusion to a concern**

Once the investigation is complete, the mandated investigation team will meet separately with the person raising the concern and the person the concern has been brought against, to feedback the outcome and whether any further action will be taken.

The team will check to ensure that any identified actions are taken and that there is no victimisation of any parties involved.

Regular reports will be given to the Trustees detailing the process. It may be appropriate to give full details of the concern to the Trustees, or just to the Chair of Trustees depending on the nature of the concern raised. Individuals who feel that their concern has not been handled effectively should write to the Chair of Trustees, explaining why, within 10 working days of receiving the outcome.

**Revised : September 2016 SMT**

**For Review: September 2018**