

Moor House School & College

Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure



This version dated:	Autumn Term 2023
Who needs to read this:	All staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors
Review cycle:	Annually
Next review date:	Autumn Term 2024
Current status:	Sent to ECM /Approved by ECM / Sent to Governors / Approved by Governors
The person responsible for this policy is:	The Principal
The committee responsible for this policy is:	Every Child Matters Committee

Executive summary

- 'Whistleblowing' is the disclosure of information by all staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors about any concern they may have about any aspect of their work.
- This policy and procedure outlines to all staff, volunteers and regular visitors the process by which they can report any concerns about any aspect of their work either internally (page 4) or externally (page 4).
- The policy also outlines how Moor House will respond to concerns raised - see information on page 5 and flowchart on page 7.
- There is a separate policy for whistleblowing related to examinations

Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

1. What is Whistleblowing?

- 1.1 'Whistleblowing' is the disclosure of information by all staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors about any concern they may have about any aspect of their work.

The information may relate to an employee's concern about a danger, fraud or other criminal or unethical conduct in, or arising out of, the workplace. The concern may be about the organisation's practices or those of fellow employees. Low level concerns about staff conduct should be reported to the Principal. Concerns about staff conduct which could put children at risk, as well as concerns about Safeguarding and Child Protection should in the first instance be reported under the Child Protection, including Safeguarding, Policy guidelines. If concerns remain then employees should follow the procedure as outlined on page 6 of this document. If the employee remains concerned then they should contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing helpline on 0800 028 0285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

- 1.2 All concerns raised will be taken seriously and investigated in an appropriate manner. A meeting will take place using an appropriate format.

- 1.3 You do not have to actually prove that the concern you have raised is true. Whistleblowing is therefore distinct from a complaint, where it is the responsibility of the complainant to prove that their own interests have been harmed. However, it is important that an employee has an honest and reasonable suspicion that the malpractice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur.

Normally, this Policy and Procedure would not be used where other policies or procedures, such as the Grievance Procedure would be more appropriate. However, if you are in any doubt about which policy applies, please proceed by raising a concern under either or both policies.

- 1.4 Moor House is committed to the highest standards of quality, probity, openness and accountability. This Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure has been adopted to enable you to raise any concerns at an early stage and in the correct way.

- 1.5 We appreciate that, from a personal perspective, it may not be easy to report a concern, particularly one that may turn out to be abuse or fraud.

2. Aims and Objectives of Policy

- 2.1 Moor House encourages employees and others¹ with serious concerns about any aspect of their work to come forward and talk to someone who can advise on what action to take or if necessary to act themselves. If requested, the concern will be dealt with in confidence, by which we mean that the person they raise the matter with will not disclose their identity without their consent.
- 2.2 The aims of the policy and procedure are:
- to outline the process for reporting of concerns,
 - to highlight the School & College's commitment to the fair protection of employees
 - to outline the investigation process and how Moor House will respond to the whistleblower
- 2.3 A primary function of whistleblowing is to provide senior managers with critical information regarding malpractice or misconduct so as to enable them to take corrective action. It is the responsibility of each employee throughout the School and College to ensure that those in charge are accountable for their action or inaction in allowing a danger or risk to continue.

3. Protection for Employees

- 3.1 The law² offers protection for employees who disclose information reasonably and responsibly in the public interest, and protects those who may become victimised as a result. This includes information relating to:
- A criminal offence that has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed
 - failure to comply with legal obligations
 - a miscarriage of justice
 - a Health & Safety danger
 - damage to the environment
 - failure to safeguard students
 - information about any of the above has been concealed.

¹ For the purposes of this Policy and Procedure, we also encourage students, trainees, agency workers, volunteers, contractors and self-employed people to abide by this Policy and Procedure. Where 'employees' is used in this Policy and Procedure, this will apply equally to members of such groups.

² Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

- 3.2 Moor House therefore guarantees that employees who raise such concerns will be supported. Moor House is committed to supporting genuine Whistleblowers with both moral and managerial support.
- 3.3 Victimising employees or deterring them from raising a concern about abuse or malpractice is a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under the Moor House Disciplinary Procedures.
- 3.4 If you feel you may be being victimised as a result of raising a concern, you must contact the person handling the concern as soon as possible (see paragraph 5.4 below concerning the identity of the appropriate person to contact).
- 3.5 Equally, if an employee abuses this process by raising an unfounded allegation maliciously or by 'going public' when it is unreasonable for them to do so, disciplinary action may be taken.

4. Confidentiality

- 4.1 If confidentiality is requested, the person who investigates the concern has a responsibility to try to investigate the issue without revealing the identity of the Whistleblower. If your evidence is needed, we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed, e.g. at a Disciplinary Hearing or in Court.
- 4.2 This Policy and Procedure is not appropriate for concerns raised anonymously. However, we will consider any anonymous reports and our response on the individual facts of the case.
- 4.3 Confidentiality clauses existing in writing or 'in spirit' do not preclude an employee raising a concern.

5. Procedure/routes for Whistleblowing

- 5.1 The procedure to follow depends on:
 - (a) how serious your concern is,
 - (b) what the concern is about and
 - (c) to whom the whistleblower feels most comfortable in talking.
- 5.2 The concerned employee may choose which route they wish to follow. If the person to whom they go feels it more appropriate to use another mechanism, this can be discussed and an agreement reached. The person to whom they go cannot unilaterally decide to follow another procedure.

- 5.3 This Policy and Procedure cannot and does not attempt to lay down a rigid procedure because much will depend on the type of concern and the feelings of the concerned employee. The following are the routes from which employees may choose.
- 5.4 If you are unhappy with the response you receive, you can take another route. We will try to handle the matter fairly and properly; by using this Policy and Procedure, you will help us to achieve this.

Route 1 - Internal

Where possible, staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors should raise the issue with their line-manager or key contact in the first instance, who should be better placed to understand the circumstances of the local arrangements and may be able to resolve the issue quickly.

Route 2 - Internal

For those cases where the by staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors does not feel able to raise the concern with their line-manager; any member of the senior management team and/or Principal may be approached. These members of staff should be told if the staff member, governors, volunteers and regular visitor does not want them to disclose his/her identity. They will treat any information sensitively and are not confined to their own departmental areas in receiving information.

The relevant senior manager will take on a supportive as well as an investigative role. If, during any stage of the investigation, senior management do not feel that they have the authority to continue with the investigation, it will be passed onto the Board of Trustees.

Route 3 - External

If you are unsure about this procedure or would like to get independent advice, 'Protect' is an independent charity that offers free and confidential help, and also the possibility of free legal advice where concerns relate to "serious malpractice threatening the public or threatening the public interest". They can be contacted on **0203 117 2520** or by email form at <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/>

For further information Protect, please see: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/> or the NSPCC Helpline 088 028 0285

6. How the School and/or College will handle the matter

- 6.1 Whichever route you take, Moor House will assess, initially, what action should be taken. This may involve an internal inquiry (a brief informal fact-finding exercise) or a more formal investigation. Moor House will tell you who is handling the matter, how you can contact that person and whether your further assistance may be required. The timescale for the investigation will also be discussed. Once you have brought the matter to the School's or College's attention, it has an obligation to undertake an investigation.
- 6.2 At your request, Moor House will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how it proposes to handle the matter. When you raise a concern, you may be asked how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you do have a personal interest in the matter, you will be asked that you inform the School or College from the outset.
- 6.3 A report will be submitted to you about the outcome of the investigation and where possible, on any proposed action. You will be given as much feedback as appropriate.
- 6.4 If, following the investigation, it is clear that matters cannot be fully dealt with internally, external authorities, such as the Health and Safety Executive, may become involved.

7. Implementation

To underline the importance of this issue, a member of the senior management team (or their representative) will discuss this Whistleblowing Policy with new staff during their initial child protection training. All staff will receive a copy of this Policy and Procedure or have access to an electronic copy.

8. Evaluation and Review

- 8.1 A formal record will be centrally held in the Principal's office of concerns raised, details of how the concerns were handled and the outcome of any investigation. These records will not identify the employee who disclosed the information.
- 8.2 The Board of Governors will review this Policy annually.

9. Conclusion

Whistleblowing matters because it promotes good governance and accountability. Moor House is committed to act appropriately and without delay on information received from conscientious staff.

FLOW CHART FOR WHISTLEBLOWING

