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| **Statutory:** | Policy provided centrally for adoption by schools with minimal amendment to the core text. Changes are allowed to the text where indicated |

# Whistleblowing Policy

## St Laurence CE Primary School

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| **Approved by:** | **Pay and Personnel Committee** |
| **Date:** | **November 2025** |
| **Next review date:** | **April 2028** |

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| **Date:** | **29th September 2026** |

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## Introduction

1. All schools and academy trusts are required to have appropriate procedures in place for handling whistleblowing and for ensuring school staff know who they can contact if they wish to raise a concern.
2. This document explains the types of concerns that can be raised under this procedure, the legal protection for whistle-blowers and how whistleblowing concerns will be handled.
3. This procedure should be followed for any whistleblowing matters raised by employees of the school, supply staff, agency workers or employees in the central team.

## Policy Statement

4. ODST and its member schools are committed to the highest possible standards of:
    - openness and inclusiveness
    - accountability and
    - integrity.

## Aim of Procedure

- To encourage those working in the school and wider Trust to report suspected wrongdoing promptly, in the knowledge that it will be taken seriously.
- To provide guidance on how to raise concerns.
- To reassure staff that they are able to raise genuine concerns made in the public interest without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

## What is Whistleblowing?

5. Whistleblowing is when a worker reports certain types of wrongdoing or misconduct within an organisation.
6. The wrongdoing disclosed must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, e.g. pupils or the general public etc.
7. The wrongdoing must relate to or show one of the following:
    - a criminal offence
    - a failure to comply with a legal obligation
    - a possible miscarriage of justice
    - a Health & Safety risk
    - damaging the environment
    - misuse of public money
    - corruption or unethical conduct
    - abuse of pupils, students or other users
    - deliberate concealment of any of these matters
    - sexual harassment
    - any other substantial and relevant concern.
8. The concern could be about something that happened in the past, is currently happening or likely to happen in the future.
9. Concerns or complaints that employees wish to raise formally, about their own employment, should normally be raised using the ODST Grievance Procedure, unless the employee believes the concern is in the public interest. This includes for example, concerns related to working conditions, working relations, employment rights or bullying or harassment.

## Legal protection for whistle-blowers

10. Whistle-blowers are protected by law from being treated unfairly or losing their jobs because they 'blow the whistle'.
11. Whistle-blowers must hold a reasonable belief that the concern they are raising is in the public interest.
12. The Trust will provide all reasonable protection for those who raise concerns made in the public interest.
13. The Trust will ensure that appropriate personal support is offered both to a worker raising a concern and to any worker against whom allegations have been made under this procedure.
14. Although an employee has certain legal obligations of confidentiality to the school/ Trust, in a limited set of circumstances, whistleblowing may override these obligations. This guidance sets out the circumstances under which these disclosures may lawfully be made.

## Procedure for raising a whistleblowing concern

Step 1- Deciding who to report the concern to

15. Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing.
16. Concerns can be raised at Trust level (see Annex 1 for contact details) or locally to your line manager, Headteacher or the Chair of Governors.
17. If you wish to report the matter to someone outside of the school/ Trust you can contact one of the external bodies/organisations listed in Annex 2.
18. Reporting concerns to the media, in most cases will lead to the loss of your whistleblowing law rights.
19. Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of your concerns, you will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient evidence or other reasonable grounds to raise them.
20. You may wish to obtain advice from a trade union representative, Citizens Advice or Protect.
21. You can be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague to any meetings that are required.

Step 2

22. The person with whom you have raised your concern, will decide what action is needed. They may ask you to provide further information. They will write to you within 10 days to let you know how your concern will be dealt with.
23. The information you can expect to receive is:
    - an indication of how the concern will be dealt with
    - an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
    - whether any initial enquiries have been made
    - whether further investigations will take place, and if not why not
    - information about support available for you.
24. The person with whom you have raised your concern will at the same time notify the ODST HR team that a whistleblowing allegation has been made.
25. Advice on dealing with concerns is available in the first instance from the ODST HR team.

Step 3

26. Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate.
27. An investigation may be carried out, depending on the nature of the allegations and the evidence/information presented. Full details of the investigation may be withheld from you to protect the confidentiality of other people.
28. Information will need to be passed on to those with a legitimate need to have this information and it may be necessary for you to provide a written statement and act as a witness in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings or enquiry. This will be discussed with you first.
29. Where an investigation is necessary, it may take the form of one or more of the following:

    - an internal local investigation by the head teacher or a governor, which may, for example, take the form of a disciplinary investigation
    - an investigation by the Internal Audit Service
    - a referral to the Police
    - the setting up of an external independent inquiry

Step 4

30. You will be informed of the outcome of any investigation, in writing, and/or of any action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law.

If you do not feel your concern has been addressed adequately you may raise it with an independent body such as one of the following as appropriate (See Annex 2 for further details):

- your trade union
- the Citizens Advice Bureau
- a relevant professional body or regulatory organisation
- a relevant voluntary organisation
- the Police
- the Local Government Ombudsman
- Equality and Human Rights Commission

31. If there is an issue of an exceptionally serious nature which you believe to be substantially true, then you may disclose the issue to someone other than those listed in paragraph 16. In determining whether it is reasonable for you to have made a disclosure, the identity of the person to whom the disclosure is made will be taken into account. Disclosures to anyone outside of the recognised bodies listed in paragraph 32 and Annex 1 and 2 may not be protected disclosures under the Act.
32. You have a duty to the school/ Trust not to disclose confidential information. This does not prevent you from seeking independent advice at any stage or from discussing the issue with the charity Public Concern at Work on 020 3117 2520 and www.pcaw.co.uk in accordance with the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

## Review and Reporting of the Procedure

33. This procedure will be regularly reviewed by the Board of Trustees of ODST to ensure that it continues to remain compliant and meets the needs of Schools and those working in schools.

## Annex 1 - Contact List for ODST

If you wish to report the matter to someone within the Trust but outside of the ODST school, please contact one of the following:

| Name | Contact |
|---|---|
| Mark Jones/ Alison McBride- HR team | odst.whistleblowing@oxford.anglican.org<br>01865 208217 |
| Chair of Estates & Safeguarding Committee - Trustee | |

## Annex 2 External Organisations

You can blow the whistle to an external organisation rather than your employer. The list below documents some of the prescribed people or bodies that you can go to. Please choose the correct one for your concern. A full list can be found online at Gov.Uk: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/431221/bis-15-289-blowing-the-whistle-to-a-prescribed-person-list-of-prescribed-persons-and-bodies-2.pdf

**Some of the bodies that may be relevant for school's staff are:**

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| **Ofsted** | Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD<br>Tel: 0300 123 1231<br>Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk |
| **Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation** | Casework Manager, Ofqual, Spring Place, Coventry Business Park, Herald Avenue, Coventry CV5 6UB<br>Tel: 0300 303 3346<br>Email: Public.Enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk<br>Online reform form: www.ofqual.gov.uk/complaints-and-appeals/whistleblowing/ |
| **National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)** | The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line is for anyone with child protection concerns in the workplace. The helpline provides support and advice to those who feel unable to get a child protection issue addressed by their employer. It can be contacted anonymously on 0800 028 0285. |
| **Health and Safety Executive** | Tel: 0800 029 4386<br>Online form: http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/raising-your-concern.htm<br>Web: www.hse.gov.uk |
| **The Local Government Ombudsman** | Address: PO Box 4771, Coventry. CV4 0EH<br>Web: www.lgo.org.uk<br>Tel no. 0300 061 0614 |
| **Data Protection and Freedom of Information** | The Office of the Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF<br>Tel: 0303 123 1113<br>Email: casework@ico.gsi.gov.uk |