

Whistleblowing Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Reed's School and Ripley Court School have adopted this policy and the accompanying procedure on whistleblowing to enable members of staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, and failure to comply with legal obligations or unethical conduct. The policy also provides, if necessary, for such concerns to be raised outside the organisation.
- 1.2. It is important to recognise that to maintain the School's positive safeguarding culture and in accordance with the statutory guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2023) and "Keeping Children Safe in Education"), staff have a responsibility to speak up promptly about safeguarding and welfare matters within the School and to external agencies where necessary. This policy has been integrated into the School's Staff Code of Conduct and training is given to staff.

2. Elements of the Policy

- 2.1. [In accordance with Lord Nolan's second report of the committee on standards in public life] The School's policy on whistleblowing is intended to demonstrate that the School:
 - Will not tolerate malpractice;
 - Encourages staff to report suspected wrongdoing as early as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, as appropriate;
 - Respects the confidentiality of staff raising concerns and will provide procedures to maintain confidentiality so far as is consistent with progressing the issues effectively;
 - Will provide the opportunity to raise concerns outside the normal line management structure where this is appropriate;
 - Will only invoke the School's disciplinary policy and procedure in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations. This policy seeks to reassure staff that they can raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisal, even if they turn out to be mistaken;
 - Will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all members of staff.

3. Procedure

- 3.1. This procedure is separate from the School's procedures regarding grievances. Employees should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise grievances about their own personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases, the School's Grievance Procedure should be used. If staff are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this procedure, they should first seek advice from the Headmaster or the Bursar & Secretary to the Governors.
- 3.2. This procedure is to enable members of staff to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the School.
- 3.3. Malpractice is not easily defined; however, it includes allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to the staff code of conduct, criminal activities, or failing to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice, or creating or ignoring a serious risk to health, safety or the environment.
- 3.4. If staff and volunteers feel unable to raise an issue with the School or feel that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, staff may use an external, independent and confidential service provided by Expolink Helpline Freephone (0800 374 199) to discuss any concerns they may have. There is also a charitable body for external advice called "Public Concern at Work" and they can be contacted via telephone (0207 404 6609) or via email (whistle@pcaw.co.uk). The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is also available via telephone (0800 028 0285) or via email help@nspcc.org.uk
- 3.5. If a member of staff is concerned about the welfare of a pupil, they should either refer the matter to the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead as outlined in the relevant school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy. If the concern about the welfare of a pupil involves an allegation against, or low-level concern about, a member of staff, the matter must be referred to the Headmaster without delay. If the concern is regarding the Headmaster, this should be referred to the Chair of Governors, whose contact details are available on the Safeguarding Noticeboard in the Staff Common Room at each school.
- 3.6. Allegations or concerns regarding non-recent abuse should be responded to and reported in the same way as contemporary allegations. In cases of non-recent abuse, the person against whom the allegation is made may still be working with children and it is important to investigate whether this is the case. However, if the person who has carried out the alleged abuse has retired or no longer works with children, the case must be reported to the Police who will take the lead.

4. Confidentiality

- 4.1. Employees who wish to raise a concern under this procedure are entitled to have the matter treated confidentially and their name will not be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator of malpractice without their prior approval. It may be appropriate to preserve confidentiality that concerns are raised orally rather than in writing,

although members of staff are encouraged to express their concern in writing wherever possible. In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education, with regards to low level safeguarding concerns being raised, if the individual sharing their concern wishes to remain anonymous then that should be respected as far as reasonably possible. If there is evidence of criminal activity, then the Police will in all cases be informed.

5. The Investigation

- 5.1. A member of staff will be at liberty to express their concern to the Headmaster a Deputy Head(Reed's only), the Bursar and Secretary to the Governors, or the DSL/Deputy DSL as appropriate.
- 5.2. Any concern raised will be investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. The member of staff making the allegation will be kept informed of progress and, whenever possible and subject to third party rights, will be informed of the resolution.
- 5.3. A member of staff who is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with will have a right to raise it in confidence with a member of the Governing Body. Alternatively, staff can follow the external procedure below.

6. External Procedures

- 6.1. Where all internal procedures have been exhausted, a member of staff shall have right of access to an independent external body. However, it should be noted that under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where a member of staff may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where the employee reasonably believes:
 - That exceptionally serious circumstances justify it;
 - That the School would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence;
 - Where they believe they would be victimised by the School;
 - Where the Secretary of State has ordered it.

7. Malicious Accusations

- 7.1. False, malicious, vexatious or frivolous accusations will be dealt with under the School's Staff Disciplinary Procedure.

8. Protection from Reprisal or Victimisation

- 8.1. No member of the staff will suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern, even if it is subsequently found they are mistaken, providing that they do so in good faith and following the Whistleblowing procedure.
- 8.2. If a member of staff believes they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform the Headmaster or Bursar and Secretary to the Governors immediately. If the matter is not remedied, staff should raise this formally using the School's Grievance Procedure.

Compiled by: Senior Deputy Head (Reed's)	Revision Number: 14 (Autumn 2025)
Approved by: Governing Body	Next Revision date: Autumn Term 2026

Revision History Table

Revision Number	Section/Paragraph number	Amendments
14 – Autumn 2025	Whole document	Delete references to Headmistress
	1.2	Addition of 'promptly' in relation to the reporting of concerns.
	3.3	Remove reference to Code of Ethics and replace with Code of Conduct.