



SOUTH WILTS GRAMMAR SCHOOL

School Aims

South Wilts is a progressive grammar school which aims to maintain high academic standards and cultural achievement within a caring environment. We seek to encourage responsibility and personal fulfilment so that students attain their maximum potential. The School is dynamic and works with the community to prepare its students for life-long learning and adult independence.

South Wilts Grammar School values and respects all students equally and aims to provide equality of opportunity wherever possible.

South Wilts is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The school fulfils its responsibilities as laid out in the following key documents: Working Together to Safeguard Children, Keeping Children Safe in Education and the procedures of the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership.

Safeguarding links/ risks associated with this policy: It is important that there is a culture of openness that enables issues about safeguarding and student welfare to be addressed. It is important that individuals are aware of how to raise issues and feel confident to do so.

Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

This policy has been provided by the school's HR provider, Strictly Education. This policy has been adopted and will be applied by the Governing Body of South Wilts Grammar School. A copy of the policy will be made available to all staff for reference.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the E-Safety Policy both are available on the school's admin drive in the policies folder.

Introduction

South Wilts Grammar School is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment, South Wilts encourages employees with serious concerns about the School's work to come forward and voice those concerns. This also applies to concerns about external organisations in their dealings with the School.

It is important to the school that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by workers or officers of the organisation is reported and properly dealt with. The school therefore encourages all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in the school or the way in which the school is run. This policy sets out the way in which individuals may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with.

This policy:

- provides the basis on which employees can raise any such concerns they may have, and receive feedback on action taken;

- allows employees to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the School's response;
- gives protection from reprisals or victimisation for 'whistleblowing' in good faith.

Legislation

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (by way of amendment to the Employment Rights Act 1996) is designed to provide protection to workers who raise genuine concerns about specified matters. These are known as "qualifying disclosures". The specified matters are:

- Conduct which is a criminal offence;
- Breach of any other legal obligation;
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice;
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public or pupils as well as other staff;
- Damage to the environment; or
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above.

A worker who makes a qualifying disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment or victimised because he/she has made the disclosure. A zero tolerance approach will be taken to any act of harassment or victimisation resulting from a member of staff raising a concern in good faith. A member of staff making an allegation within the scope of this policy will be supported when raising a concern, providing that he/she:

- Believes the concern to be true;
 - Is not acting maliciously or making false allegations;
- Is not seeking any personal gain.

1. What is the policy?

1.1 There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to raise grievances about their own employment. This policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of individual grievances. The concern may be about something that:

- is unlawful;
- is against the school's policies;
- amounts to improper conduct;
- seems likely to harm somebody or the environment; or
- represents a cover-up of these sorts of issues.

This policy applies to all employees and officers of the organisation. Other individuals performing functions in relation to the organisation, such as agency workers and contractors, are encouraged to use it

2. What safeguards are there?

2.1 Harassment or Victimisation

The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisals from those responsible for the malpractice. The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take all possible measures to protect employees who raise concerns in good faith.

2.2 Confidentiality

The school will protect the identity of employees who raise concerns and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated, however, that the investigation may reveal the source of the information, and statements made by the employees who raised the issue may be required as part of the evidence. If a worker requests that their identity be protected, it will not be disclosed unless disclosure is reasonably required by law. Whilst anonymous reports will not be rejected outright, those making them must be aware that it is considerably more difficult to investigate matters properly in such circumstances or to resolve the concern satisfactorily.

The school encourages employees to put their name to allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken account of will include:

- the seriousness of the issue raised;
- the credibility of the concern;
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

2.3 Untrue allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. However, if employees make allegations that are malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action against them is likely.

3. What is the procedure?

3.1 The earlier employees express their concern the easier it is to take action.

3.2 As a first step an employee should normally raise concerns with their immediate manager, the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where this is appropriate to the nature of the concern. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice.

3.3 Concerns are better raised in writing. This should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the employee is concerned about the situation. An employee who does not feel able to put their concerns in writing can telephone or meet the appropriate officer. Where a concern is raised verbally, the person hearing it must ensure that a written statement of it is made to assist with any subsequent investigation. Senior management will take all concerns raised within the scope of this policy seriously and identify the appropriate level of investigation, taking external advice as necessary. The concerns raised will be treated in confidence, whilst recognising that the individual raising the concerns may need to come forward as a witness at a later date. Employees may ask their Trade Union or Professional Association to raise the matter in conjunction with them.

The whistleblower may invite a recognised trade union representative or a work colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews held in connection with the concerns raised.

4. How will the school respond?

4.1 The action taken by the appropriate officer will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may for example:

- be investigated internally;
- be referred to the Police;
- be referred to the external auditor or
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

4.2 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. Where a concern or allegation falls within the scope of specific procedures (e.g. child protection or unlawful discrimination issues) they will normally be dealt with using those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. Within two weeks of a concern being received, the School will write to the employee who raised the issue:

- acknowledging that the concern has been raised;
- indicating how it proposes to deal with the matter;
- where possible, giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- telling the employee whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

4.3 The amount of contact between the investigators considering the issue and the employee who has raised the issue 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 from the employee.

4.4 When any meeting is arranged with the employee, they will be given the right to be accompanied by a representative or fellow worker who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

4.5 The school accepts that employees need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Therefore, subject to legal or contractual constraints, employees will receive information about the outcomes of any investigations.

Written records will be taken throughout the investigation and the employee will be kept informed of the likely timescale and progress of the investigation. The investigator will be responsible, where possible within 28 days, for reporting formally to the Headteacher and/or Governing Body on the outcome of the investigation.

4.6 If the employee is concerned that the officer is involved in the wrongdoing, has failed to make a proper investigation or has failed to report the outcome of the investigations to management, they should inform the Chair of Governors, who will arrange for another manager to review the investigation carried out, make any necessary enquiries and make their own report to the Chair of Governors. If for any other reason the employee does not wish to approach their line manager they should also in the first instance contact Headteacher. Any approach to the Headteacher will be treated with the strictest confidence and the employee's identity will not be disclosed without their prior consent.

On conclusion of the investigation, the worker will be informed of the outcome and the proposed action to be taken, whilst respecting the confidentiality of individuals and any legal constraints.

5. What happens if the employee is not satisfied with the action?

5.1 This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue to raise relevant concerns within the School. The school hopes employees will be satisfied with the action taken as a result. If an employee is not satisfied, and feel it is right to take the matter outside the school, the following are possible contact points, some or all of which may be appropriate:

- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations;
- The local member of parliament
- National Audit Office
- Health and Safety Executive
- the Police;
- the charity Public Concern At Work (telephone 020 7404 6609).

5.2 If an employee does take the matter outside of the school, they must make sure that they do not disclose otherwise confidential information.

Management of the Policy

The school has an overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. The school will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes and will report as necessary to the Governors.

Data Protection

When an individual makes a disclosure, the school will process any personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the individual makes the report is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of dealing with the disclosure.

9. Status of Policy and Review

The content and operation of this policy is reviewed as and when deemed necessary by the Governing Body. The policy is discretionary and does not confer any contractual rights.

Reviewed by	Date of Review / approval	Review cycle	Next Review Date	Statutory / Non statutory	Website
People & Culture	Autumn 2023	3 years	Autumn 2026	Non Statutory	No