



Tittensor First School

Whistle Blowing Policy

Policy date: September 2024

Review date: September 2026

Introduction

The Governors and staff of Tittensor First School seek to carry out all aspects of school business and activity with full regard to high standards of conduct and integrity. In the event that Governors, School staff, parents, or the School community at large, become aware of activities which give cause for concern, we have established the following Whistleblowing Policy, or Code of Practice, which acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially, and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter, to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

Throughout this policy, the term 'whistleblower' denotes the person raising the concern or making the complaint. It is not meant in a pejorative sense and is entirely consistent with the terminology used by Lord Nolan as recommended in the Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: Local Spending Bodies, published in May 1996.

Tittensor First School is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. We recognise that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and have therefore developed a system, which allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the School environment, but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the School.

We are committed to creating a climate of trust and openness, so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with full confidence that the matter will be appropriately considered and resolved.

The provisions of this policy apply to matters of suspected fraud and impropriety, and not matters of more general grievance, which would be dealt with under the School grievance procedures.

When might the Whistleblowing Policy apply?

The type of activity or behaviour, which we consider should be dealt with under this policy, includes:

- _ manipulation of accounting records and finances
- _ inappropriate use of School assets or funds
- _ decision making for personal gain
- _ any criminal activity
- _ abuse of position
- _ fraud and deceit
- _ serious breaches of School procedures which may advantage a particular party
- _ (eg. tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)

What action should the whistle blower take?

Tittensor First School encourages the whistleblower to raise the matter internally in the first instance to allow those Governors and School staff in positions of responsibility and authority the opportunity to right the wrong and give an explanation for the behaviour or activity.

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We have designated a number of individuals to specifically deal with such matters and the whistleblower is invited to decide which of those individuals would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter:

- Mrs Sarah Woolley Chair of Governors
- Miss G Craig Headteacher
- Mr S Allen Staff Governor
- External Agency i.e. Trade Union Representative

The whistleblower may prefer to raise the matter in person, by telephone, or in written form marked 'private and confidential' and addressed to one of the above named individuals. All matters will be treated in strict confidence and anonymity will be respected whenever possible.

How will the matter progress?

The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation (the investigating officer/s) will carry out a preliminary investigation. This will seek to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can be resolved internally. The initial assessment may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice, or assistance.

Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officer(s), possibly in conjunction with the Governing Body, will consider how best to report the findings and what corrective action needs to be taken. This may include some form of disciplinary action or third party referral, such as the Police.

The whistleblower will be informed of the results of the investigation and the action taken to address the matter. Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter will be reported to the Governing Body.

If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns should be raised with the investigating officer(s) and/or the Governing Body.

Respecting confidentiality

Wherever possible, Tittensor First School seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistleblower and will as far as possible protect him/her from reprisals. We will not tolerate any attempt to victimise the whistleblower or attempts to prevent concerns being raised and will consider any necessary disciplinary or corrective action appropriate to the circumstances.

Raising unfounded malicious concerns

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns, with the knowledge that they will be taken seriously. If individuals raise malicious unfounded concerns or attempt to make mischief, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence or require some other form of penalty appropriate to the circumstances.

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Conclusion

Existing good practice with Tittensor First School in terms of its systems, and of internal control both financial and non-financial, and the external regulatory environment in which the School operates, ensures that cases of suspected fraud or impropriety rarely occur. This Whistleblowing Policy is provided as a reference document to establish a framework within which issues can be raised confidentially, internally, and if necessary outside the management structure of the School. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned.

Additional information

What the law says about whistleblowing

If you disclose information about wrongdoing the law protects you from being treated unfairly or losing your job.

A disclosure qualifies for protection if you are a worker and you disclose something about an organisation.

A disclosure must be about something that affects the general public such as:

- a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed
- an legal obligation has been breached
- there has been a miscarriage of justice
- the health or safety of any individual has been endangered
- the environment has been damaged
- information about any of the above has been concealed.

This is set out in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. The Act applies to England, Scotland and Wales. For more information about child protection across the UK see our pages on reporting concerns in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

The NSPCC has been a prescribed whistleblowing body for child welfare and protection since 2014 (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016). This means any worker who has child protection or welfare concerns can make a disclosure to us and we can seek to protect them against unfair treatment at work. You can find out more about whistleblowing on the GOV.uk website.

Useful contacts:

Sir Robert Francis's Freedom to Speak Up review report can be found at https://freedomtospeakup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/F2SU_web.pdf.

Contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

Call [0800 028 0285](tel:08000280285)

Email help@nspcc.org.uk

