



Woodend Farm school

Kindness comes in many forms

Whistleblowing Policy

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RECORD OF POLICY AMENDMENT / HISTORY

| Version / Issue | Updated by | Date | Reviewed/ Approved By Directors | Reason for Change |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| V1.0 | Gemma Quantrill | 22/11/2022 | 26/01/2023 | New policy |
| V1.1 | Gemma Quantrill | 20/10/2023 | 08/11/2023 | Annual policy update |
| V1.2 | Nicola Overland | 31/10/2024 | | Annual updates |
| V1.3 | Sarah Coney | 28/04/2025 | 17/09/2025 | Updated for change of leadership |
| V1.4 | Sarah Coney | 13/10/2025 | 17/09/2025 | Amendment to job titles |
| V1.5 | Gemma Quantrill | 29/01/2026 | | Annual Policy Update |



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1. Introduction

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 was enacted to ensure a climate of greater frankness between employers and workers so that irregularities can be identified and addressed quickly, and to strengthen employment rights by protecting responsible workers who blow the whistle about wrongdoing or failures in the workplace. The policy set out in this document applies those statutory provisions to the administration of Woodend Farm school.

Woodend Farm School acknowledges that the UK Government is undertaking ongoing reforms to the national whistleblowing framework. This policy will be updated to reflect any future legislative or regulatory changes once enacted, ensuring continued compliance with statutory requirements.

2. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing encourages and enables employees to raise serious concerns within Woodend Farm school rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

Employees are often the first to realise that something seriously wrong may be happening within the school. However, they may not express their concerns either because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school or because they fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may be easier to ignore the concern than to report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

The policy applies to all employees, (including those designated as casual hours, temporary, agency, authorised volunteers or work experience), directors and those contractors working for the school-on-school premises, for example, agency staff, builders, etc.

Woodend Farm school is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, integrity, and accountability. In line with that commitment, it encourages employees and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It recognises that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. This policy makes it clear that staff can do so without fear of reprisals and is intended to encourage and enable staff to raise serious concerns within the school, rather than overlooking a problem or publicly disclosing the matter.

Staff making a disclosure must have a reasonable belief that the information disclosed tends to show wrongdoing and that the disclosure is in the public interest. The law no longer requires disclosures to be made "in good faith," though malicious or knowingly false allegations may still result in disciplinary action.

3. Aims and Scope of this Policy

This policy aims to:

- provide avenues for you to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken.
- allow you to take the matter further if you are dissatisfied with the response.
- reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that the information disclosed tends to show wrongdoing and that the disclosure is in the public interest

This policy covers concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. It is not intended as



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recourse against financial or business decisions made by the school. Nor is it an alternative to well established disciplinary or grievance procedures. It may however overlap with other school policies for dealing with complaints, with board or management Codes of Conduct and with protocols for good working relationships within Woodend Farm school.

4. Types of Concern

Concerns raised under this whistleblowing policy should be about something that is, or may be:

- > unlawful or a criminal offence.
- > a breach of a legal obligation.
- > a miscarriage of justice.
- > mistreatment or abuse of a service user or a member of the public for whom the school has a responsibility.
- > in disregard of legislation governing health and safety at work.
- > seeking undue favour over a contractual matter or a job application.
- > against the school or Financial Regulations.
- > fraud and corruption.
- > amounts to improper conduct or unauthorised use of public funds.
- > has led to or could lead to damage to the environment.
- > a deliberate cover up of information tending to show any of the above.
- > other unethical conduct.

The employee/worker raising the concern must reasonably believe they are doing so in the public interest. This means that personal grievances and complaints are not usually covered by this policy and should be dealt with under the Mediation and Grievance procedure.

5. Safeguards

Harassment or victimisation

Woodend Farm school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice. If what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you provide a service.

The school will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith. It will not tolerate any resulting harassment or victimisation (including informal or indirect pressures) and will treat this as a serious disciplinary offence which will be dealt with under the proper procedures.

Any investigation into an allegation of malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures which already affect you.

No confidentiality clause, non-disclosure agreement, or settlement agreement used by the school can prevent a worker from making a protected disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Staff retain the legal right to whistleblow despite any such agreements.



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6. Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and the school will do its best to protect your identity if you do not want your name to be disclosed. If investigation of a concern discloses a situation which is sufficiently serious to warrant disciplinary action or Police involvement then your evidence may be important. Your name will not be released as a possible witness until the reasons for its disclosure at this stage have been fully discussed with you. This policy encourages you to put your name to your concern wherever possible.

Please note that staff must:

- have a reasonable belief that the information disclosed tends to show wrongdoing
- believe the disclosure is in the public interest
- not act maliciously or make false allegation.
- not seek personal gain.

Records relating to whistleblowing disclosures will be stored securely, accessed only by authorised personnel, and retained for a minimum of six years in accordance with data protection and retention requirements.

7. Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the school against the following criteria:

- the seriousness of the issues raised.
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.
- Woodend Farm schools best interests.
- the protection of Woodend Farm schools assets.

You should also bear in mind that if you do choose to raise a concern anonymously it will be more difficult for the matter to be investigated and for you to be provided with feedback. For this reason, where you wish to raise your concern anonymously, this may best be done through your Trade Union.

8. Untrue Allegations

If you make an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no reprisals will be taken against you. If, however, you make malicious or troublesome allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

9. How to raise a concern

Where a concern relates to the safety or welfare of a child, staff must follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the requirements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)*. Staff may also contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) directly if the concern involves an allegation against staff, leaders, or the Executive Headteacher.



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Staff should in the first instance raise a concern with their line manager. However, if for some reason this first step is inappropriate then the concern should be raised with the Executive Headteacher. If the concern is with the Executive Headteacher it need to be raised with the Chair of the Board Rob Saggs rsaggs@woodendfarm.school.

Where the concern involves or implicates the line manager, Executive Headteacher, or the Chair of the Board, staff may raise the concern directly with an external prescribed body (see Section 14).

Concerns can be raised orally but it is good practice for the concern to be recorded in writing at an early stage to ensure that all the details are correctly understood. A written allegation should set out the background and history of the concern (giving names, dates and places where possible) and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

It is preferable for you to record this in writing yourself, however, where the person to whom you voice your concerns writes these down a copy will be sent to your home address or via your representative to give you an opportunity to agree this as a true record.

The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to take action.

Although you are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for your concern.

10. How Woodend Farm School will respond

The action taken by the school will depend on the nature of the concern. After initial enquiries to assess the seriousness of the matter it may be investigated internally, specific procedures where these are applicable should always be referred to – for example in child protection or discrimination issues when referral to another agency might be the most appropriate course of action.

If urgent action is required in response to a concern this may well be taken before a full investigation is conducted.

Some concerns may be resolved by action agreed with you without the need for investigation or it may be that an investigation can be completed without the person or persons under investigation being aware of the process.

In any event within ten working days of a concern being received, the school will write to you.

- > acknowledging that the concern has been received.
- > indicating how it proposes to deal with the matter.
- > giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response.
- > telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made.
- > telling you whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not and
- > naming an independent person to support you during any investigation, e.g. your Trade Union official.

This named person will make contact with you immediately, explain his/her role, deal with all confidentiality issues, agree frequency of contact and keep you informed about the progress of the investigation and the investigating officer(s) informed of any further issues you think are necessary. You should raise with this support officer any concerns you have about the conduct of the investigation.



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This officer will take appropriate steps to support you in the workplace and at any criminal or disciplinary proceedings which may eventually result from your concern and at which you are asked to give evidence.

If you wish to retain your anonymity you will need to nominate a representative to whom correspondence may be directed in order to keep you informed.

The amount of contact between investigating officers and you 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 you.

When any meeting is arranged, you have the right, if you so wish, to be accompanied by a Union or professional association representative or a friend (who need not be associated with the school).

The school accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, you will receive information about the outcome of any investigations and/or proceedings.

The school aims to complete most investigations within 30 working days. Where an investigation is complex and requires longer, staff will be informed in writing of revised timeframes and the reasons for the extension.

11. What if an employee received a complaint about them.

If the complaint or allegation is at all significant or made in a formal way, particularly by a member of the public or external users, then employees should inform the Executive Headteacher – even if they believe or know the complaint to be groundless or unjustified.

Where a complaint or ‘grumble’ clearly does not justify taking up time in this way, making a brief note on a file or diary or similar will often be advisable.

12. Malicious Allegations

If, following appropriate investigation, it is considered that an employee has made a malicious allegation without real substance and/or which could not be reasonably considered to be in the public interest, this will be taken as a most serious matter and may potentially lead to disciplinary action in line with the schools disciplinary procedure. Where other individuals engaged by the school make a malicious allegation, the school will investigate the allegation thoroughly and take appropriate action, which may include terminating the contract/arrangements with the individual.

13. Detriment

Woodend Farm school is committed to ensuring that an employee who makes an allegation in good faith suffers no detriment from doing so.



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14. How the matter can be taken further

If it is not appropriate to raise the concern internally, or if you remain dissatisfied with the school's response, you may make a protected disclosure to one of the following prescribed bodies:

- **Ofsted** – for concerns relating to safeguarding, child welfare, or education quality
- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** – for allegations against staff or leaders
- **Children's Social Care** – for immediate safeguarding risks
- **Police** – where criminal activity is suspected
- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)** – for health and safety or workplace hazards
- **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)** – for data protection breaches
- **Charity Commission** – if relevant to governance structure
Staff should take advice from a Trade Union representative or professional body if unsure which prescribed body is appropriate.

15. The Responsible Officer

The Senior Leadership Team has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.

The Executive Headteacher has operational responsibility for this policy and must ensure that all leaders and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training.

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing.

End of Document



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