



## **Beechfield Education Ltd. Whistle blowing policy**

**Policy date:** November 2024  
**Policy review date:** November 2025

## Introduction

Staff may be the first to realise that there could be something seriously wrong within an organisation and Beechfield Education Ltd would encourage all staff to speak out and raise concerns in a timely way so they can be investigated and hopefully resolved quickly.

## Policy Statement

In all areas of its activities, Beechfield Education Ltd is committed to the highest standards of professional practice, integrity and accountability.

All staff have a responsibility for respecting the dignity and rights of the children and young people using Beechfield Education Ltd's services. Each staff member has a responsibility to report concerns about unacceptable or questionable care practices. Not doing so is a neglect of professional duty.

Similarly, if a staff member is concerned about financial or accounting irregularities or any other kind of malpractice, they have a responsibility to report the matter.

Managers have a duty to be available to receive such reports in a supportive and encouraging manner and to act as speedily as possible on the information received.

## Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- Provide a formal but straightforward way for staff to raise serious concerns about any aspect of the organisation's work and to receive feedback on the subsequent action taken.
- Allow staff to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the organisation's response.

Reassure staff that they will be protected from possible retaliations or victimisation for reasonable whistle blowing that is made in the public interest in accordance with the procedure set out below.

## Scope

This policy provides a procedure for Beechfield Education Ltd's workers to follow when raising concerns. In this respect workers include employees, agency staff, volunteers, work experience students and trainees.

The policy and procedure is not intended to cover concerns that can be progressed under other procedures. Such as the staff discipline, conduct and grievance policy.

Whistle blowing is different to making a complaint. A complaint is made by a member of the public, service user or service user's advocate who feels personally wronged by the organisation and wants a resolution – see the Beechfield Education Ltd Complaints Procedure.

Matters relating to any kind of safeguarding concern **must** be reported in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy and procedures by escalating the matter to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for child safeguarding. These concerns must be raised in writing, on the same day the concern arises.

Under this whistle blowing policy a concern may be about something a staff member reasonably believes, for example:

- Is unlawful.
- Is a health & safety risk.
- Falls below acceptable standards of practice.
- Is contrary to a Beechfield Education Ltd policy.
- Amounts to improper conduct.
- Involves possible fraud and corruption.
- Involves the unauthorised use of Beechfield Education Ltd's funds.

## Protecting Staff

Beechfield Education Ltd will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of a member of staff for raising a concern in the public interest. It is a disciplinary matter to victimise a whistle blower. Additionally, certain categories of workers are protected in law against victimisation for making a 'protected disclosure'.

This policy and procedure has been designed to enable staff members to raise concerns within the organisation. Managers are responsible for acting on any information and feeding back on subsequent action taken. If managers fail to do this or the staff member does not believe the matter has been handled satisfactorily, the procedure entitles them to take the matter further.

If staff don't feel confident and comfortable talking to a member of the Beechfield Education Ltd staff team they can speak an external agency, such as the NSPCC and the LADO services.

## Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the whistleblower as far as is possible.

This policy encourages a member of staff to put their name to a concern whenever possible. They:

- Must disclose the information in the public interest.
- Must reasonably believe it to be true.
- Must not act maliciously or make false allegations.
- Must not seek personal gain.

Concerns should only be raised outside of the organisation when all tiers within Beechfield Education Ltd have been exhausted or if they are discussing issues with an external agency such as the NSPCC or the LADO services. Information should always be passed on confidently on a need-to-know basis in accordance with this procedure.

Failure by staff to comply with the procedure may result in disciplinary action being taken against them.

## PROCEDURE

### How to raise a general concern

If you have a general concern you should normally, as a first step, raise it with your immediate line manager. This will depend on the concern and who you think may be involved. If you believe that your manager is involved, then you should approach another senior manager. If you think the malpractice extends to that manager, you should raise it with the managing directors.

Concerns are better raised in writing. You 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. If for any reason you feel that you are unable to put your concern in writing first, you should meet with the appropriate manager who will help you to produce a written report of your concern.

The earlier you express a concern, the easier it will be for action to be taken.

Although you will not be expected to prove the truth of any allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the appropriate manager that there are reasonable and enough grounds for your concern.

If it is that you have a shared concern with a colleague(s), then it is perfectly appropriate for you to raise the concern together. It is not appropriate, however, for you to discuss the matter with others before or after the concern has been raised.

If you feel you need support to raise the concern you may invite another staff member or trade union representative to assist you to raise the matter but seek advice from your line manager before approaching a staff member if possible.

### How to raise a concern involving a child or young person

If the concern is about poor practice or one of abuse or neglect in relation to one or more children or young people it should be reported immediately by following the procedure laid out in the school's safeguarding policy, this can be found on Teams.

## How the organisation will respond to concerns raised

Beechfield Education Ltd will always respond to your concern. In doing so it will be important for you to understand that investigating your concern is not the same as either accepting or rejecting it.

The action taken by Beechfield Education Ltd will depend on the nature of the concern. The matter raised may be subject to:

- A management investigation (this may be undertaken by someone independent of the organisation)
- An investigation under the Beechfield Education Ltd disciplinary procedure.
- An investigation under the Child Protection policy; the involvement of the police.
- An independent inquiry.

To be fair to individuals, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and what form it should take. The overriding principles informing Beechfield Education Ltd's actions will be the safety of children and young People.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

Within fourteen working days of a concern being received, Beechfield Education Ltd 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.

The amount of subsequent contact between the manager considering the matter and you will depend on the nature of the concern, the potential difficulties involved, and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from you.



If a meeting needs to be arranged with you, you have the right, if you so wish to be accompanied by a trade union representative or the nominated staff member.

Beechfield Education Ltd will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience because of raising a concern. For example, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the organisation will advise you about the procedure.

Beechfield Education Ltd accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Subject to legal constraints and confidentiality to any third parties, you will receive information about the outcome of any investigation.

#### **How the matter can be taken further, if necessary**

This policy is intended to provide you with a clear route to raise concerns within Beechfield Education Ltd and for the concerns to be dealt with and settled appropriately. However, if you feel that this has not happened, and you feel that it is necessary to take the matter outside of the organisation having gone through all this procedure or the child protection policy and procedures you should contact:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding in your area or Ofsted, regarding matters relating to children and young people.
- The Police, on other criminal matters.

You should ensure these routes of communication are used only after the internal procedure has been thoroughly exhausted and where you therefore feel you have no option but to raise the concern externally.

Information that is provided to you on a confidential basis must be treated as such and this may only be overridden where there is a clear public interest in disclosing it and you act reasonably.



## Independent advice

For independent advice on whistle blowing you can call:

ACAS – [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)  
0300 123 1100



