

Title:	Whistle Blowing
Associated Policies:	GDPR and Data protection Safeguarding and Child Protection Disciplinary
1	Policy Statement
	<p>The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (the “Act”) places a legal responsibility on employers to ensure that matters of serious public concern can be addressed.</p> <p>The Governing Body of Northampton School for Girls are committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment they encourage individuals with serious concerns about an activity in the School to voice those concerns.</p> <p>This policy is provided as a reference document to outline how issues can be raised internally, and if necessary, outside the leadership structure of the School; it documents the assurance that concerns will be seriously considered and appropriate action taken.</p> <p>Additionally, it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides the basis on which individuals can raise serious concerns they may have, and receive feedback on action taken, • allows individuals to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the School’s response, and • outlines the protection from reprisals or victimisation for ‘whistle-blowing’ <p>It should be noted that any clause within a worker’s contract of employment is void if it attempts to prevent an individual from making a protected disclosure under the Act. This code does not remove or diminish the existing contractual or statutory rights of employees.</p>
2	Scope of the Whistleblowing Policy
	<p>This policy applies to all employees; however, the Act also covers those contractors working for the School on its premises. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the School in their own premises. The term ‘individual’ used throughout this document is used to include all the above.</p>
3	The principles of the policy
	<p>There are existing procedures in place at Northampton School for Girls to enable individuals to raise grievances about their own employment and contracts of employment. This policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of individual grievances and relates to both employees and workers.</p> <p>This policy is in addition to the complaints procedure of the school and other statutory reporting procedures. It seeks to encourage you to raise your concerns internally within the organisation.</p> <p>If you are unsure whether or not to use this policy/procedure, or if you need independent advice at any stage, you can contact Protect, which is an independent charity which can give free confidential advice at any stage on how to raise a concern about serious malpractice at work. Please refer to Appendix 1 for further details.</p> <p>A qualifying disclosures’ is any disclosure of information that is made in the public interest and in the reasonable belief of the worker may show that one of more of the following is either happening at the present time, took place in the past or is likely to happen in the future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A criminal offence • A miscarriage of justice • An act creating risk to health and safety

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An act causing damage to the environment • A breach of any other legal obligation; or • Concealment of any of the above <p>An individual does not have to raise a grievance in order to make a 'protected disclosure'; however, if the employee intends to raise the matter as a grievance, this intention must be clearly stated.</p>
4	<p>Safeguards in place to protect whistle-blowers</p> <p>In making the disclosure, an individual must have a reasonable belief that the information disclosed shows one or more of the offences or breaches listed above. The belief need not be correct, but the individual must show that they held the belief and that it was a reasonable belief in the circumstances, at the time of the disclosure.</p> <p>Individuals are encouraged to come forward with genuine concerns in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously. Northampton School for Girls 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. As far as possible Northampton School for Girls will seek to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the individual raising the concern and will seek to protect him/her from reprisals. In this regard, the School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of the individual who has raised the concerns, nor will any attempt to prevent individuals from raising concerns be acceptable.</p>
5	<p>Confidentiality</p> <p>Northampton School for Girls encourages individuals to put their name to allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, as the ability of the School to gather crucial information from the complainant is not possible. However, such complaints will be considered at the discretion of the School; in exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken account of will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the seriousness of the issue raised, • the credibility of the concern, • the likelihood of being able to confirm that the allegation is from attributable sources • the ability to trace the source of unfounded or malicious allegations <p>Northampton School for Girls will endeavor to protect the identity of individuals who raise concerns and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated, however, that the investigation and statements made by the individual(s) who raised the issue may reveal the source of the information.</p>
6	<p>Raising a concern with the School</p> <p>The earlier concerns are expressed by individuals, the easier it is to act. As a first step, Northampton School for Girls encourages individuals to initially raise concerns with their Head Teacher and to allow those school staff and governors in positions of responsibility and authority an opportunity to address the issue and seek an explanation for the behaviour or activity. This will depend on the nature of the concerns, the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is alleged to be involved.</p> <p>Individuals who feel that they cannot approach their Head Teacher should approach either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Chair of Governors • an HR Advisor <p>If an employee so wishes, advice may also be sought from a Trade Union or Professional</p>

	<p>Association. The employee should consider who would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter; however, care is needed to ensure that this will not result in a breach of confidentiality or the disclosure of exempt information.</p> <p>Concerns raised under this policy should, where possible, be submitted in writing, setting out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places, and the reason why the individual is concerned about the situation. Individuals who do not feel able to put their concerns in writing can telephone or meet the appropriate officer.</p> <p>Individuals may invite their trade union or professional association to raise the matter internally on their behalf, but should take care that any disclosures are protected disclosures under the Act.</p>
7	<h3>The School's approach</h3> <p>The action taken by Northampton School for Girls will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be investigated internally,• be referred to the Police, or other appropriate body• be referred to an External Auditor, or• form the subject of an independent inquiry <p>In order to protect individuals, initial enquiries will be made to determine whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or unlawful discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for further investigation.</p> <p>The preliminary investigation may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance; for example, the involvement of other members of staff, legal or HR advisors, the police, or other appropriate external body.</p> <p>Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officer(s), will consider how best to report the findings and what (if any) corrective action needs to be taken. This may include some form of disciplinary action or third-party referral.</p> <p>Within 14 working days of a concern being received, a School Officer will write to the worker, if known, and in accordance with the communications channel agreed with the worker, who raised the issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• acknowledging that the concern has been raised,• indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter,• where possible, giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response, and telling the individual whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not. <p>The amount of contact between the officers considering the issue and the person 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 individual.</p> <p>When any meeting is arranged with the individual, he or she will be given the right to be accompanied by a trade union or professional association representative or a work colleague who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.</p>

	<p>The School accepts that individuals need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal or contractual constraints, individuals will receive appropriate information about the outcomes of any investigations.</p>
8	Dissatisfaction with a response
	<p>This policy is intended to provide individuals with an avenue to raise relevant concerns within Northampton School for Girls. If the individual is dissatisfied with the resolution of the matter, or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been dealt with appropriately, these concerns should initially be raised with the investigating officer and then the governing body</p> <p>Where the concern is of a particularly serious nature, the employee may feel that it is more appropriate to take the matter outside of the School. If you would like independent advice about how to raise serious concerns constructively, then you should contact Protect.</p> <p>There are a number of bodies which have been prescribed by the Secretary of State for the purpose of receiving disclosures; details of these bodies can be found on the GOV.UK website: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183340/11641blowing-the-whistle-to-a-prescribed-person.pdf</p> <p>The worker must believe that the information given and the allegations made are substantially true and ensure that they are not acting for personal gain.</p> <p>If an individual does take the matter outside of the School, they must ensure that they do not disclose confidential information which is unrelated to the issue being raised.</p> <p>In making a disclosure outside of the School to a prescribed body, individuals should be aware that the disclosure must be made to an appropriate prescribed person or organisation and the individual must believe that the information disclosed and any allegations made are true.</p>
9	Raising unfounded or malicious concerns
	<p>If an allegation is made but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the individual raising the concern and Northampton School for Girls will endeavour to protect the individual from reprisals or victimisation.</p> <p>However, if an employee makes an allegation which – through the internal investigation process - is found to be malicious, mischievous or vexatious, or a disclosure made for personal gain, such actions will be considered as a disciplinary offence and are likely to result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee.</p> <p>Whistle-blowers making untrue allegations may expose themselves to actions for libel or slander which together make up the civil wrong of defamation. This is a complex area of law. In essence a person puts themselves at risk of being sued for damages if, without justification, they publish or communicate a false statement about someone which may injure his or her reputation in the eyes of ordinary members of society.</p> <p>However, a whistle-blower will not generally be liable provided that they had a legal, moral or social duty or interest in making the statement to a person with a similar interest.</p>
10	Responsible Officer
	<p>The Chair of Governors has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy, overseeing the upkeep of records of concerns raised and the outcomes. They will report as necessary to the Governing Body and Trustees</p>
11	Policy Review
	<p>6.1 This policy will be monitored as part of the Academy's annual internal review and reviewed on a three year cycle or as required by legislature changes.</p>

Appendix 1 - Advice and Information



Protect aims to make whistleblowing work for individuals, organisations and society.

Every year, we support around 3,000 whistle-blowers who call our Advice Line. In addition, we work with organisations on improving their speak up arrangements and campaign for better legal protection of whistleblowers.

Free, confidential whistleblowing advice - 020 3117 2520 / <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies (gov.uk)

List of prescribed people and bodies you can report malpractice to, other than your employer.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing>



Acas is an independent public body that receives funding from the government.

We provide free and impartial advice to employers, employees and their representatives on:

- employment rights
- best practice and policies
- resolving workplace conflict

When things go wrong, we help to resolve workplace disputes between employers and employees.

[Whistleblowing - Public Interest Disclosure](https://archive.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1919) (<https://archive.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1919>)

Acas helpline – 0300 123 1100

Acas.org.uk

Helpline Online - <https://archive.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4489>