



Devonshire House Preparatory School

Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

This policy is for the whole school including EYFS

Written by: Mr Henry Keighley-Elstub	September 2022
This Policy is the responsibility of: Upper School, Junior School and Early Years Deputy Heads in conjunction with the Head.	
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Policy

Devonshire House School encourages an open culture in its dealings between its senior members, junior members, staff and all people with whom it engages in the course of its business and legal relations. In particular the School recognises that effective and honest communication is essential if any issues of malpractice are to be effectively dealt with and the School's integrity ensured. All staff should have responsibility for the children in their care, and must speak out immediately should they have any concerns over the safeguarding or welfare of a child. (see *Safeguarding Policy*).

This policy is formulated under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 to provide staff with a procedure for raising concerns about the safeguarding of pupils or other wrongdoing. It is designed to provide guidance to all those who work with or within the School who may from time to time feel that they need to raise certain issues relating to the School with someone in confidence.

It is written with regard to Working Together to Safeguard Children (Sept 2018) and the school Bribery Policy and the Bribery Act of 2010.

This policy is distinct from the School's Grievance Procedure. If your complaint relates to your personal circumstances in the workplace then you should use the Grievance Procedure.

This policy is for guidance only and does not form part of your contract of employment.

Procedure

Subject Matters of Disclosure

1. This policy will apply in cases where a member of staff genuinely has reasonable grounds for believing that one of the following sets of circumstances is occurring, has occurred or may occur within the School:
 - the school is not acting appropriately to concerns over the safeguarding or welfare of a child
 - the School's safeguarding policy and/or its procedures are not being followed.
 - that a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed, or is likely to be committed
 - that a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he or she is subject
 - that a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur
 - that the health and safety of any individual has been , is being or is likely to be endangered
 - that the environment has been, is being or is likely to be illegally damaged
 - that information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the preceding paragraphs has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

While it is not necessary that you prove the malpractice or misconduct that you are alleging and may simply have a reasonable suspicion, we value any concerns reported in good faith under this procedure. However, only disclosures concerning those actions falling strictly in the categories raised above will be eligible for the relevant statutory protection.

2. If you wish to raise or discuss any issues which might fall into the above category you should contact your head of department or the Head who will treat the matter in confidence.
However should the concern be a safeguarding issue then anyone can make a referral direct to the local authority.

If you decide that you wish to formally raise an issue in-house under this policy you should do so in writing to your head of department or the Head. In such cases it is likely that further investigation will be necessary and an investigator will be appointed. Generally this will be the head of department or some other appropriate person who will report their findings. You may be required to attend a disciplinary or investigative hearing as a witness, or to meetings as part of the investigation. You may be accompanied by a work colleague to any meeting if you wish. Every effort will be made to keep the identity of an individual who makes a disclosure under this policy confidential, at least until any formal investigation is under way. The individual is also expected to keep the fact that they have raised a concern and the identity of those concerned confidential. However, there may be circumstances where it will be necessary to disclose your identity, in such circumstances every effort will be made to

inform you in advance. Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that your working environment and/or working relationship is/are not prejudiced by the fact of your disclosure. Should you feel that you are suffering a detriment as a result of making the disclosure you should inform your head of department, the Head, School Governance or other person whose judgment you trust.

At the conclusion of any investigation procedure the investigator will inform you of the outcome whilst respecting any confidentiality with regard to any disciplinary action.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome or the way in which the investigation was handled you should raise your concerns with the Head.

In some circumstances and always for concerns about a child or allegations of abuse by a teacher or other adult, it may be necessary to involve external authorities.

Further details of the investigation procedure under this policy together and confidentiality issues are attached as Annex A.

3. The policy is aimed at providing a mechanism for reporting alleged malpractice within the School and it is hoped that it will be unnecessary for staff to alert external organisations. However, in serious circumstances, or if despite the best efforts of the School, you believe that disclosure within the School is inappropriate or has been unsuccessful, reports can be made to external organisations such as the local authority, the Health and Safety Executive and Information Commissioner), ISI, Ofsted or the Information Commissioner.
4. You should be aware that the policy will apply where a disclosure is made in good faith and where you reasonably believe that the information disclosed and any allegation contained in it are substantially true.

If, following investigation the employee's concerns are found to be made in bad faith (for instance in order to cause disruption within the School), or concerns information which an employee does not substantially believe is true, or indeed if the disclosure is made for personal gain, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

Annex A

Investigation Procedure under Whistleblowing Policy

1. INVESTIGATION OF DISCLOSURE

1.1 The School is committed to investigating disclosures fully, fairly, quickly and confidentially where circumstances permit. Following the submission of a formal written disclosure, the Head (or another individual acting in their place) will acknowledge receipt within five working days and make appropriate arrangements for investigation.

1.2 The length and scope of the investigation will depend on the subject matter of the disclosure. In most instances, the Head will carry out an initial assessment of the disclosure to determine whether there are grounds for a more detailed investigation to take place or whether the disclosure is, for example, based on erroneous information. In any event a report will be produced and copies will be provided to the Proprietor and, where appropriate, you will also receive a copy.

If you are dissatisfied with the investigation or its conclusion then you should refer to the School Governance. When the School Governance has investigated your complaint, you will be informed of the result of the investigation and what, if any action has been taken.

1.3 So far as the Head considers it appropriate and practicable, you will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation. However, the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or actions taken. The School will, however, aim to deal with all disclosures in a timely manner and with due regard to the rights of all individuals involved.

1.4 We recognise that there may be matters that cannot be dealt with internally and in respect of which external authorities will need to be notified and become involved either during or after our investigation. The school will follow the advice of the Local authority and will not carry out any unauthorized investigation should the concern relate to safeguarding allegations against a member of staff. We will endeavour to inform you if a referral to an external authority is about to or has taken place, although we may need to make such a referral without your knowledge or consent if we consider it appropriate.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

2.1. Every effort will be made to keep the identity of an individual who makes a disclosure under this policy confidential, at least until any formal investigation is under way. In order not to jeopardize the investigation into the alleged malpractice, you will also be expected to keep the fact that you have raised a concern, the nature of the concern and the identity of those

involved confidential. There may, however, be circumstances in which, because of the nature of the investigation or disclosure, it will be necessary to disclose your identity. This may occur in connection with associated disciplinary or legal investigations or proceedings or for other reasons.

- 2.2. If in our view such circumstances exist, or if appropriate legally, we will make efforts to inform you that your identity is likely to be disclosed. If it is necessary for you to participate in an investigation, the fact that you made the original disclosure will, so far as is reasonably practicable, be kept confidential and all reasonable steps will be taken to protect you from any victimization or detriment as a result of having made a disclosure. It is likely, however, that your role as the whistleblower could still become apparent to third parties during the course of an investigation.