



Lincoln Christ's Hospital School

Whistleblowing Policy

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1. Introduction

Lincoln Christ's Hospital School is committed to providing the highest standards of professional teaching and care for its students. In line with this commitment, this policy is intended to encourage and enable staff and others with serious concerns about malpractice, wrongdoing, and unethical behaviour to come forward and raise those concerns within the school. In all other cases where staff are unhappy about decisions or actions affecting their employment, they should use the grievance procedure.

Provided a concern is raised in good faith, even if it is mistaken, the school will investigate the matter thoroughly. This assurance does not extend to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know to be untrue. The Governors and Senior Managers of the school will not tolerate any form of harassment, victimisation, or retaliation against anyone raising a genuine concern. However, if it transpires that the concern was raised maliciously, disciplinary or other management action may be taken.

2. The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA)

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998 came into force in July 1999. It is designed to protect whistle-blowers from detriment and/or unfair dismissal. The people protected by the Act include employees, third-party contractor staff, agency workers, and work experience providers.

The legislation does not introduce a general protection for whistle-blowers in all circumstances. A disclosure will qualify for protection if, in the reasonable belief of the worker making it, it tends to show one or more of the following has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur:

- Possible fraud and corruption
- The unauthorised use of school funds
- A criminal offence
- A failure to comply with a legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice
- The endangering of an individual's health and safety
- Damage to the environment
- Deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above.

A qualifying disclosure will be protected under the Act if it is made:

- In good faith to the worker's employer (either directly or through internal procedures authorised by the employer) or to another person whom the worker reasonably believes is solely or mainly responsible for the failure in question.
- To a legal adviser in the course of obtaining legal advice.

Qualifying disclosures will also be protected if they are made in a manner other than the ones specified above, provided that the worker makes the disclosure in good faith, reasonably believes that the information and any allegation contained in it are substantially true, and does not act for personal gain. One or more of the following conditions must also apply:

- The worker reasonably believed that they would be victimised if they had made the disclosure to the employer or to a prescribed person.
- There was no prescribed person, and the worker reasonably believed that disclosure to the employer would result in the destruction or concealment of evidence.
- The worker had already disclosed substantially the same information to the employer or a prescribed person.

It must also be reasonable for the worker to make the disclosure. It will be for the employment tribunals to consider whether any particular failure is exceptionally serious: this is a matter of fact, not of a worker's personal belief.

3. Objectives of the Whistleblowing Policy

- To encourage and enable employees and other workers to raise genuine and legitimate concerns internally and also to define clearly the situations in which they may raise the matter externally without being subject to any detriment, including victimisation and disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. An employee who makes a rash disclosure (to the media, for example) of a matter that could and should have been raised internally will not be protected by PIDA.
- To provide an opportunity for those concerns to be investigated and for appropriate action to be taken to ensure the matter is resolved effectively within the school wherever possible.
- To deter serious malpractice.
- To promote accountability throughout the school.

4. Additional Commitments

The school is committed to providing training and support for staff on the Whistleblowing Policy to ensure they are aware of the procedures and their rights as whistle-blowers. Training sessions will be conducted periodically to reinforce this understanding.

The school will provide clear contact information for external organisations, such as Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work), that can offer guidance and support for whistle-blowers.

A clear timeline and process for investigating and resolving whistleblowing concerns will be established to ensure timely and effective handling of cases.

The policy will be aligned with the school's broader safeguarding and child protection policies, emphasising the importance of protecting the well-being of students in the context of whistleblowing.

5. How to Report a Concern

Concerns should be reported to the line manager or someone else in the management chain. If for any reason this is felt to be difficult, or the report is about someone senior in the management chain, the report should be made to the Headteacher.

If, after following these procedures, the person raising the concern does not receive what they consider to be an appropriate response, they may report the matter directly to the Chair of Governors.

6. Confidentiality

While open reporting is encouraged, the Governors and Senior Managers of the school recognise there may be situations where a member of staff wants to raise issues in confidence. Occasionally, a

conflict may arise between protecting matters in confidence and the need to develop information in support of criminal or disciplinary actions. Should this happen, the matter will be considered very carefully. If the reported wrongdoing is so serious that action must be taken to prevent further harm, the Governors and Senior Managers will explain what co-operation is likely to entail and what support will be available for the person who raised the original concern.

7. Retention of Records

Records on all whistleblowing cases will be retained for six years. The papers will only form part of an individual's personnel file if disciplinary action has been taken against that individual as a consequence of resolving the matter.

8. Addressing Malicious or Unfounded Concerns

The school recognises the importance of ensuring that all concerns raised are treated seriously. However, if a concern is found to be malicious or unfounded, appropriate actions may be taken to ensure fairness and prevent misuse of the policy.

9. Further Information, Help, and Advice

Further information is available from Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) – a charitable organisation that promotes accountability and good governance in organisations. They can be contacted on 020 3117 2520 or at www.protect-advice.org.uk.