

Whistleblowing Policy

Aligned with Ofsted, NCFE, SEND Code of Practice, Equality Act, and KCSIE

This is a controlled document and, as such, will be kept read only. Any changes must be approved by the Author.

Author	Version No	Date Approved	Review Date
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Hatfield Wick Education Whistleblowing Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Hatfield Wick Education (HWE) is committed to promoting a culture of transparency, accountability, and integrity. Our CARES values (Compassion, Autonomy, Respect, Empathy, and Support) underpin our approach to whistleblowing, ensuring concerns are raised and addressed fairly, confidentially, and without fear of reprisal.
- 1.2 This policy is in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), Essex Safeguarding Board procedures, SET Procedures, Ofsted regulations, and relevant UK legislation, including the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. This policy also operates in line with the Equality Act 2010, the SEND Code of Practice, and relevant Department for Education statutory guidance.
- 1.3 HWE encourages all staff, volunteers, contractors, students, parents, and other stakeholders to report any concerns regarding unethical, unsafe, or unlawful practices within the organisation, including safeguarding, misconduct, fraud, or statutory breaches.

2. RAISING CONCERNS / MAKING A DISCLOSURE

Whistleblowing is the act of reporting wrongdoing in the public interest. It is not the same as raising a personal grievance, which should be addressed through the organisation's Complaints or Grievance Procedures.

2.1 What should be reported?

Concerns may include:

- 2.1.1 Safeguarding concerns, including failure to protect children from harm.
- 2.1.2 Unethical, unsafe, or illegal practices.
- 2.1.3 Financial mismanagement or fraud.
- 2.1.4 Health and safety breaches.
- 2.1.5 Failure to comply with legal obligations or professional standards.
- 2.1.6 Discrimination, harassment, or bullying.
- 2.1.7 Cover-ups of wrongdoing.

2.2 How to raise a concern

Concerns should be reported to Rosie Walker DSL, in the first instance. Where the concern relates to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), the concern must be reported directly to the Director or to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). If this is not appropriate, individuals may contact another senior director or one of the external bodies listed in Appendix A.

3. **RESPONDING TO CONCERNS**

Upon receiving a disclosure, HWE will acknowledge the concern within 5 working days and outline the next steps. A designated investigator will be appointed, and a fair and objective process will follow. Where concerns relate to safeguarding, the matter will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and may be referred to external agencies without delay.

4. **PROTECTION FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS**

HWE is committed to protecting individuals who raise genuine concerns in good faith. No one will be victimised, harassed, or dismissed for whistleblowing. Any form of retaliation will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence. Whistleblowers are protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. HWE will ensure no detriment occurs to individuals raising concerns in the public interest.

5. **MALICIOUS OR VEXATIOUS ALLEGATIONS**

If a concern is raised in good faith but is not upheld, no action will be taken against the whistleblower. However, malicious or deliberately false allegations may result in disciplinary action.

6. **DATA PROTECTION & CONFIDENTIALITY**

All reports will be handled with strict confidentiality. Personal data will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR). Information may be shared without consent where required to safeguard children or comply with statutory duties.

7. **REVIEW & MONITORING**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Director of Strategic Development & Safeguarding Lead to ensure compliance with statutory safeguarding guidance, Ofsted regulations, and best practices.

Appendix A – External Bodies for Whistleblowing

1 Safeguarding & Child Protection Concerns

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 03330 139797
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline: 0800 028 0285 | Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
- Fraud or Financial Malpractice
- Education & Skills Funding Agency:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency>
- Essex County Council Counter Fraud Team: CounterFraud.Team@essex.gov.uk

2 Health & Safety Concerns

- Health and Safety Executive (HSE): <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

3 Data Protection Issues

- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO): <https://ico.org.uk/>