



Harrison College Ltd

Whistleblowing Policy

1. Background

Harrison College is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain high standards. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

Whistleblowing is protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), which forms part of the Employment Rights Act 1996. A worker who makes a qualifying disclosure in the public interest is protected by law from victimisation or dismissal. This is termed a Protected Disclosure.

2. Policy Aims

All staff, volunteers and stakeholders should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the leadership team. The policy aims to;

- encourage all staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected.
- to provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.
- to reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

3. Who this policy relates to

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of the organisation, including; Directors, support staff, grounds staff, employees, consultants, contractors, term-time, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff and volunteers and anyone else working for or providing services to Harrison College. For the purpose of this policy 'stakeholder' will be used as an umbrella term for all users.

4. What is whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the act of reporting concerns which relate to suspected wrongdoing, illegal activity, unsafe practice, misconduct or risks to students and young people that occur within Harrison College.

This may include:

- (a) Criminal activity, (for example, fraud, corruption or theft has been or is likely to be committed)
- (b) Miscarriages of justice.
- (c) Danger to health and safety to staff and/or students.
- (d) Damage to the environment.
- (e) Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements.
- (f) Bribery.
- (g) Financial fraud or mismanagement.
- (h) Negligence.
- (i) Breach of our internal policies and procedures.
- (j) Conduct likely to damage our reputation.
- (k) Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information.
- (l) Where a child is or you suspect a child is at risk of harm or may have been harmed.
- (m) The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy. Whistleblowing enables stakeholders to raise concerns in the public interest when they believe that issues are not being addressed appropriately through normal management or safeguarding procedures.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal concern, dissatisfaction or grievance about employment issues. A complaint is usually about how an individual has been personally affected by a service, decision, action, or behaviour. In those cases, you should use the Grievance Procedure or Anti-Bullying and Harassment processes that are explained within the Employer Handbook, as appropriate.

Whistleblowing differs from a complaint because the concern is raised in the interests of protecting children, staff, the public, or the organisation, rather than seeking redress for a personal grievance

Any issues to do with Child Protection or Safeguarding Students should be raised under Harrison College Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

However, whistleblowing is an essential safeguard for children and young people, ensuring that concerns about misconduct, unsafe practice, or failures in safeguarding can be raised and addressed promptly and appropriately

If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy, you should seek advice from the Principal.

5. Raising a whistleblowing concern

If you have a concern about wrongdoing, malpractice, misconduct, safeguarding failures, illegal activity, or risks to children, staff, or others should raise the matter as soon as possible. We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with the Principal, or with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) if it applies to safeguarding. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. If you feel unable to do this, other routes are available to you such as asking a Union representative to act on your behalf to contact the Principal or DSL. It is hoped that the Principal or DSL will be able to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. In some cases, they may refer the matter to the Board of Directors.

However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that the Principal or DSL has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact the Board of Directors.

If it involves the Principal, it should go to a Board Director or straight to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). If in any doubt of the process or route, please contact the LADO. Doncaster LADO is Milovan Orlandich and Tony Dobbs 01302 737332. LADO@doncaster.gov.uk.

For more information and to make an online referral go to City Of Doncaster website [Allegations against adults working with children referral form \(LADO\) - City of Doncaster Council](#)

Concerns can be raised anonymously, although staff should be aware that anonymity may make it more difficult to investigate and provide feedback on the outcome.

All whistleblowing concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly, fairly, and sensitively. The person receiving the concern will make an initial assessment to determine the nature of the allegation, any immediate risks, and whether urgent action is required, particularly where there are safeguarding concerns or where concerns may be referred to external agencies, including the Local Authority Designated Officer

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(LADO), Children's Social Care, the Police, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), or other relevant regulatory bodies. Where a whistleblowing concern relates to the safety or welfare of a child, safeguarding procedures will take precedence, and appropriate referrals will be made without delay in accordance with statutory safeguarding guidance and local safeguarding partnership procedures.

Where you have approached us directly we will acknowledge receipt of the concern, keep you informed of progress, and provide feedback on the outcome, subject to legal, confidentiality, and safeguarding constraints. A written and oral complaint should detail the background and history of the concern, (giving dates) and the reason why they are concerned about the situation providing as much factual information as possible and do not need proof of wrongdoing, only a reasonable belief that a concern should be investigated.

6. Investigation and Outcome

Once you have raised a concern, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information. We will take down a written summary of your concern and provide you with a copy after the meeting. All concerns will be recorded securely and confidentially. We aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with or resolve the matter.

In some cases, we may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

The person receiving the concern will keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result.

You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

Where appropriate, the matters raised may then be referred to the police, an external regulatory body, or form the subject of an independent enquiry. Information will only be shared with those who need to know in order to assess, investigate, or respond to the concern.

If we conclude that a whistle-blower has made false allegations maliciously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain, the whistle-blower will be subject to disciplinary action. Employees may also be subject to disciplinary action if they disclose confidential information externally in some circumstances.

If an investigation finds that a concern is unsubstantiated but was raised honestly and in good faith, no action will be taken against the individual who raised it. However, concerns found to be deliberately false or malicious may result in disciplinary action

7. Confidentiality

We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.

Anonymous disclosures are not usually investigated but the College will exercise its discretion whether to investigate in these circumstances. Proper investigations may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible and have been made in good faith. Whistle-blowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if

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their identity is revealed should come forward to their Principal or one of the other contact points and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality.

There may be occasions where the identity of the whistleblower needs to be disclosed, for example where required by law, as part of a formal investigation, court proceedings, or where there is an overriding safeguarding duty to protect a child or other person from harm.

All records relating to whistleblowing concerns will be maintained securely and in accordance with data protection requirements and pay due regard to the Data Sharing Agreement. The UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 provide the legal framework that underpins most data-sharing agreements. Information sharing will be undertaken in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, relevant safeguarding legislation, and any applicable local Data Sharing Agreements.

Staff must maintain confidentiality and should not disclose information relating to a whistleblowing concern to anyone other than those responsible for receiving, investigating, or responding to the matter. This does not prevent an individual from making a protected disclosure through appropriate channels in accordance with whistleblowing legislation

8. External Disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator, Children's Social Care, the Police, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA), the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Ofsted, or other prescribed bodies. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern externally.

The independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a parent, carer, student, business employer, external supplier or service provider. The law allows you to raise a concern in good faith with a third party, where you reasonably believe it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact the Principal, DSL or Directors for guidance.

9. Unauthorised Disclosure

An unauthorised disclosure is the sharing of information relating to a whistleblowing concern with individuals or organisations who do not have a legitimate need to know, or through channels that are not appropriate or permitted under college procedures or relevant legislation.

You should not disclose whistleblowing concerns to the media, post information on social media, or share confidential information online without proper authority. Providing confidential documents or information to the media without lawful authority is forbidden.

Unauthorised disclosure may compromise investigations, breach confidentiality, place individuals at risk, and may constitute a breach of the college's policies or legal obligations

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Sharing confidential information about a concern with colleagues who are not involved in the investigation or discussing the matter with parents, students, business mentors or other members of the public is forbidden.

10. If you are not satisfied

While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy, you can help us to achieve this. If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can escalate your concern and share it with the Board of Directors.

Where concerns remain unresolved, or the individual reasonably believes that the matter cannot be addressed internally where escalated, they may make a disclosure to an appropriate external body, regulator, or prescribed person in accordance with whistleblowing legislation

Depending on the nature of the concern, a whistleblower may report concerns to:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for allegations against adults working with children.
- Children's Social Care where there are concerns about a child's welfare or safety.
- The Police where a criminal offence may have been committed.
- Ofsted regarding concerns about the quality of education, leadership, safeguarding, or compliance.
- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for concerns relating to academy trusts, governance, or financial irregularities.
- The Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) regarding serious misconduct by teachers.
- The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for serious health and safety concerns.
- The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for concerns relating to data protection or information management. (Relevant regulator for UK data protection matters.)

11. Protection and support for whistleblowers

It is understandable that whistle-blowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken or their concern unsubstantiated. Any individual who raises a whistleblowing concern honestly, reasonably, and in the public interest will be treated fairly and with respect.

Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment or informal pressure connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered have suffered detriment, victimisation, or unfair treatment as a result of raising a concern, you should inform your Principal, Head of HR or the DSL immediately. If the matter is not remedied, you should raise it formally using our grievance procedure. Such allegations will be taken seriously and investigated promptly.

The College will not tolerate any form of victimisation, harassment, bullying, discrimination, retaliation, or other detrimental treatment against an individual who raises a genuine concern. Individuals who make a protected disclosure are entitled to legal protection under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Employment Rights Act 1996. Such individuals must not suffer detriment or unfair dismissal as a result of raising concerns in accordance with this policy. Staff must not threaten to retaliate against whistle-blowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

The college will take reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality of whistleblowers and, where appropriate, provide support throughout the process. This may include access to a senior leader,

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opportunities to discuss concerns, signposting to wellbeing support services, and regular communication regarding the progress of any investigation, subject to legal and confidentiality requirements

A confidential support and counselling hotline is available to whistle-blowers who raise concerns under this policy. Their contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

12. Responsibility for success of this policy

The effective implementation of this Whistleblowing Policy is a shared responsibility. All employees and stakeholders have a duty to uphold the principles of openness, honesty, accountability, and safeguarding by raising concerns where they believe wrongdoing, unsafe practice, or misconduct may have occurred. Leaders and managers are responsible for promoting a positive culture in which concerns can be raised without fear of retaliation, ensuring that disclosures are taken seriously, handled appropriately, and investigated promptly.

Every member of the school community shares responsibility for contributing to a safe environment where concerns are listened to, acted upon, and used to improve practice, protect children, and maintain public confidence in the College.

Harrison College has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised in this policy.

The overall monitoring responsible person is the Principal who will ensure the Board will receive appropriate information regarding whistleblowing activity, while maintaining confidentiality.