WALTHAMSTOW MONTESSORI SCHOOL
Whistleblowing Policy

Whistleblowing, enforced by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, is when a worker reports a concern about the improper actions or omissions of their colleagues or their employer, which may cause harm to others or to the organisation. The staff member reporting the concern is called a whistleblower. If the whistleblower should reasonably believe that there is:

- a criminal offence
- a failure to comply with any legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- a health and safety risk to an individual
- damage to the environment
- or a concealment of any of the above

they should report their concern to the whistleblowing officer of the school: Lorna-Mahoney.

Obvious examples of such improper actions include mistreating, harming or physically/emotionally abusing a child, breaches of the school's health and safety or breaches of the school's code of conduct.

Not dealing with problems early could have a devastating effect on the school with costly fines, compensation, higher insurance premiums, damaged reputation, regulatory investigation, lost jobs, and even lost lives. At WMS staff are therefore made aware that it is their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of the whistleblowing officer or external agencies, particularly when child safety may be at risk. We treat whistleblowing as an early warning system that can potentially improve the trust and confidence among staff by creating a culture of honesty and openness.

How to raise a concern

As a first step, concerns should normally be raised with the whistleblowing officer of the school: Lorna Mahoney.

If staff feel uncomfortable raising their concern with the whistleblowing officer, or if the concern is about the whistleblowing officer, they can report their concern to a senior member of staff.

When reporting a concern employees' employment rights will be protected.

Staff can also raise concerns with or to the Local Authority Safeguarding Officer (LADO) - 0208 496 3646 / 07791 559 789

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff who wish to make a written report are advised to set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places, where possible, and the reasons for making the disclosure. This will make the investigation easier to complete.

If a whistle-blowing concern is not confirmed by an investigation the matter will be closed.

Although a member of staff is not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of the allegation, they will need to demonstrate that they have an honest and reasonable suspicion that malpractice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.

The school will respond to any concerns raised by investigating all concerns seriously and effectively.

In order to protect a member of staff who raises a concern and those accused of wrong-doing, initial enquiries will be made to decide 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, disciplinary, grievance or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

The outcome of an investigation following a whistleblowing incident may lead to disciplinary procedure. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before

any investigation is conducted. Staff will be told how the school proposes to deal with a concern within ten working days of the concern being brought to the school's attention.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated with confidence, and every effort will be made not to reveal a staff member's identity, if they so wish. However, while making all reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of the matter as a whole, at certain stages in the investigation it may be necessary to make the origin of the complaint known to the person or persons the allegations concern, to external agencies such as police, local authority safeguarding children's board, social services or the court.

All concerns raised within the remit of this procedure will be assessed to determine if the confidentiality extends to withholding the name of the complainant. There would be a substantial reason for doing so, such as a real risk of personal harm. Complainants should be aware however, that their identity might be revealed by inference.

Untrue allegations

The school accepts that deciding to report a concern can be very difficult and uncomfortable. If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against him/her. If, however, a member of staff makes an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

This policy was adopted on: 01.03.2016

Date last reviewed: 27th September 2026

Date to be reviewed: 27th September 2027