



THE **CORBET** SCHOOL

Whistleblowing Policy

Associated Policies:

The Finance Manual

Autumn 2024

THE CORBET SCHOOL WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

1. The Corbet School is committed to open and honest communication and the highest possible standards of integrity. Part of meeting that commitment is to encourage employees, trustees and others who have serious concerns to speak up. This may need to be on a confidential basis and the school wishes to emphasise that if someone does 'speak up' they can do so without fear of reprisals. Such policies are termed "blowing the whistle" and this phrase is used throughout this statement but should be viewed as a positive action of speaking up.

2. Introduction

Employees or trustees may be the first to see that something is seriously wrong within the school. Such wrongdoings relate to:

- fraud and corruption
- discrimination
- abuse of vulnerable people
- damage to the environment
- Health & Safety breaches
- failure to comply with legal procedures.

It is the duty of employees to speak up when they have serious concerns, and it is the duty of The Corbet School to act on those concerns and protect and support employees when they do. A failure to report a serious concern could be construed as collusion. Difficult as it may be to speak up, employees should be aware of their special position and of their duty to make their concerns known.

This policy statement makes clear what employees should do and what will happen as a result. The policy has been discussed with all the relevant trades unions and professional organisations and has their support.

This policy statement is sign posted to employees and Trustees to advise specifically on blowing the whistle on wrongdoing. It should not be confused with the complaints or grievance procedures.

3. Serious Concerns

There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance about your own employment. This policy is intended to cover serious concerns outside the scope of those procedures.

A serious concern may be related to something that:

- is unlawful.
- is against the Corbet School's Constitution, financial rules (e.g., the Finance Manual), contract rules or other policies.
- does not meet established standards or working practices.
- amounts to improper conduct.

Theft, bribery and corruption, discrimination, the abuse of children, vulnerable adults or staff, and environmental misuse are all the types of things which would fall into these categories.

4. Safeguards

4.1 Harassment and Victimisation

The school recognises that deciding to report a concern can be difficult, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for malpractice. The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

This does not mean that if you are already the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures, that those procedures will be halted as a result of your whistleblowing.

4.2 Confidentiality

The school will do its best to protect your identity when you raise a concern and do not want your name to be disclosed. It must, however, be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence.

4.3. Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be considered would be:

- the seriousness of the issues raised, and the validity of the concern.
- the likelihood of confirming the allegations from other sources.

4.4. Untrue Allegations

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. In such circumstances employees and/or trustees, will be supported. If, however you make malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

- the background and history to your concern.
- dates and places where possible.
- the reasons for your concerns.

6. How will the School Respond?

6.1. The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:

- be investigated internally with The Corbet School but independently of those directly involved.
- be referred to the Police.
- be referred to the external Auditor.
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

6.2. In order to protect individuals and The Corbet School, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. These will be made confidentially, and every attempt made to protect the employee. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g., child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

6.3. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

6.4. Within 10 working days of a concern being made in writing, you will receive a written reply: -

- acknowledging that the concern has been received.
- indicating how the matter will be progressed.
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response.
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made.
- confirming if further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

7. Standards of Conduct

Employees of the school are bound by professional standards of conduct, and the school policies and procedures. One of the best ways to guard against corruption is to ensure that proper procedures are followed in making decisions and awarding contracts.

Actions which breach these procedures are not only unauthorised but may also lead to a loss in public confidence, and the school reputation. Any concern will therefore be treated seriously.