



# Prior Park Schools

## An Education for Life

# WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

V.16

Whole Trust? Yes	Statutory? Yes	Website? No
Reviewed: September 2016	Next review: September 2020	FIRST APPROVED: July 2015



Prior Park Schools (PPS) comprises four schools. Three of those schools, Prior Park College, The Paragon and Prior Park Preparatory School are incorporated in England as Prior Park Educational Trust Ltd. The fourth Prior Park School Gibraltar is incorporated in Gibraltar as Prior Park School Ltd. Both are companies limited by guarantee and registered charities.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Prior Park Schools (PPS) is committed to creating a culture of safety and raising concerns, with an emphasis on openness and accountability. This is essential to conducting business with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain high standards. However, all organisations face the risk of malpractice, wrongdoing or of unknowingly permitting illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur. PPS staff should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing or dangers at work and be able to raise concerns confidentially.

1.2. Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information where a member of staff reasonably believes (and it is in the public interest) that malpractice or wrongdoing is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed. These are called “qualifying disclosures”. The law provides protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters such as:

- o harm or risk of harm to children;
- o possible fraud, financial irregularities, corruption or bribery;
- o malpractice;
- o danger to health and safety;
- o criminal offences or breach of any legal obligations;
- o miscarriages of justice;
- o damage to the environment;
- o inappropriate behaviour or acting contrary to the staff code of conduct;
- o dishonesty, unethical conduct;
- o the deliberate concealing of information about any of the above.

1.3. The aims of this policy are:

- o To encourage 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.

- o To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns internally and, if necessary, outside PPS.
- o To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- o To instil a culture of valuing staff and of reflective practice.

1.4. This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of PPS, including senior staff, employees, contractors, trainees, part-time, zero hours and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff and volunteers. Training and support will be provided for staff in regard to the PPS whistleblowing procedure.

1.5. Two key pieces of legislation relating to this policy are Employment Rights Act 1996 and Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

1.6. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and PPS may amend it at any time.

## 2. PRINCIPLES

2.1 This policy is intended to demonstrate that PPS:

- o will not tolerate malpractice or wrongdoing and will investigate any matter raised under this procedure promptly and thoroughly;
- o respects the confidentiality of staff raising concerns and will maintain their confidentiality so far as is consistent with progressing any action effectively;
- o will protect from any detrimental treatment any individual who raised a genuine concern under this procedure;
- o will provide the opportunity to raise concerns outside the normal line management structure, where this is appropriate;
- o will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all employees;
- o will invoke the PPS Disciplinary Policy in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations.

2.2 This procedure is for disclosures about matters other than a breach of an employee's own contract of employment. If an employee is concerned that his/her own contract has been, or is likely to be, broken, he/she should use the PPS Grievance procedure.

2.3 This Whistleblowing policy should be used by employees to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice or wrongdoing within any of the PPS schools.

### **3. CONFIDENTIALITY**

3.1 Employees who wish to raise a concern under this procedure are entitled to have the matter treated confidentially and their name will not be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator of malpractice without their prior approval. It may be appropriate to preserve confidentiality that concerns are raised orally rather than in writing, although members of staff are encouraged to express their concern in writing wherever possible. If there is evidence of criminal activity, then the Police will be informed in all cases.

### **4. PROCEDURE**

4.1 An employee will be at liberty to express their concern to the Headmaster, Deputy Headmaster, Prior Park Schools Business and Finance Director or a Governor.

4.2 Any concern raised will be investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. The member of staff making the allegation will be kept informed of progress and, whenever possible and subject to third party rights, will be informed of the result.

4.3 An employee who is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with will have a right to raise it in confidence with a member of the Governing Body.

### **5. EXTERNAL PROCEDURES**

5.1 Where all internal procedures have been exhausted, a member of staff shall have a right to access an external person/body. This may include (depending on the subject matter of the disclosure) HMRC, the Health and Safety Executive and/or the Local Authority Designated Officer (where the disclosure relates to a child protection issue).

5.2 Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where a member of staff may be entitled to raise a concern directly with the appropriate external body. This would be where the member of staff reasonably believes:

- o that exceptionally serious circumstances justify it;
- o that PPS would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence;
- o where they believe they would be victimised by PPS;

- o where the Secretary of State has ordered it or the law requires it.

## **6. MALICIOUS ACCUSATIONS**

6.1 If it is concluded that false allegations were made maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the member of staff will be subject to disciplinary action.

## **7. PROTECTION FROM REPRISAL OR VICTIMISATION**

7.1 Any individual who raises concern under this policy, in line with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, will be protected from any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern, including detrimental treatment by other members of staff.