

Whistleblowing policy (Public Interest Disclosure)

About this policy

1. The College is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and expects all staff to maintain high standards. It encourages staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. The policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.
2. This policy conforms to guidance on the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA), which encourages staff to raise concerns internally within their employing organisation in the first instance. The PIDA protects staff and encourages disclosures in the public interest.

Who is covered by this policy?

3. This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels at the College, including senior managers, teachers, support staff, governors, consultants, contractors, part-time and fixed term workers, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as 'staff' in this policy).

What is whistleblowing?

4. Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to the College's activities. This includes but is not limited to:
 - bribery, fraud or financial irregularity;
 - the unauthorised use of public funds;
 - any criminal activity;
 - serious departure from professional standards/ abuse of position;
 - failure to comply with legal or regulatory obligations, including the duty to act (e.g. Safeguarding and the reporting of extremism and PREVENT);
 - disclosure related to miscarriages of justice;
 - actions which endanger the health or safety of any individual, including risks to learners, staff or the public;
 - sexual or physical abuse of learners/staff;
 - neglect or emotional abuse of learners in the College;
 - damage to the environment;
 - actions which are intended to conceal any of the above
5. This policy should not be used for complaints relating to individual personal circumstances, such as the way a member of staff has been treated at work. In such cases the Grievance Procedure or Bullying and Harassment Policy should be used as appropriate.

How to raise a concern

6. The College hopes that in many cases, staff concerns will first be raised with a line manager. However, where this is not appropriate (e.g. in the case of an external consultant, agency staff or contractor) or an individual prefers not to do so for any reason, contact should be made with the Whistleblowing Officer unless the disclosure concerns the Whistleblowing Officer, in which case the Principal, or the disclosure concerns fraud or theft in which case the Director of Finance, unless the fraud or theft disclosure concerns the Director of Finance then the Chairman of the Audit committee, but if the concern is about malpractice within the Senior Management Team as a whole then the Chairman of Governors. Disclosure to the Chairman of Governors and the Chairman of Audit should be made via the Clerk to the Governors. Contact details are at the end of this policy.
7. Contact can be in person or writing. You are encouraged to identify yourself when raising a concern as anonymity may mean follow up questions and investigation are not possible. Concerns expressed anonymously will be investigated but consideration will be given to the seriousness of the issues raised and how likely the concern can be confirmed from alternative sources.
8. In the context of concerns regarding Safeguarding practices, staff should follow the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. However, if you believe a child or young person has been harmed by a person in a position of trust and you feel unable to raise this issue with the College or you consider either the Senior Management Team or the Designated Safeguarding governor have not addressed concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the College's safeguarding procedures, other whistleblowing channels are available namely:
 - **The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – contact details can be found at the end of the policy**
 - **The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is also available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally – contact details can be found at the end of the policy**
9. In the context of concerns regarding fraud or theft the College will follow the procedure in the Fraud and Theft Response Plan.

How the College will respond

10. On receipt of your concern the College will carry out initial enquiries and an assessment to determine the scope of the investigation.
11. If you have a personal interest in the matter the College would ask that you report this at the outset.
12. In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice the initial enquiries will help the decision whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle is the public interest.

13. The College will determine the appropriate action to take and where appropriate the matters raised may
 - be investigated by management, or through the disciplinary process;
 - be referred to the police;
 - be referred to the external auditor;
 - form the subject of an independent inquiry.
14. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgency is required this will be considered before any investigation is conducted.
15. Within 10 working days of a concern being raised the College will contact you to:
 - acknowledge that the concern has been received;
 - tell you who your point of contact will be
 - indicate how the College will deal with the matter;
 - give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
 - supply relevant information on staff support mechanism, and
 - confirm whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.
16. If an internal investigation is to take place the College will ensure that the individual appointed to carry out the investigation does not have any direct association with the individual to whom the disclosure relates.
17. You are able to bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings arranged under this policy and they must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.
18. Where an allegation is made against an individual employed at the College that individual may be informed of the allegations and kept updated as to the progress of the investigation if deemed appropriate by the individual appointed to carry out the investigation.
19. The College will take steps to minimise any difficulties individuals may experience as a result of raising a concern and, subject to legal constraints, will confirm the outcome of any investigation.
20. Any recommendations for further action made by the College will be addressed to the Principal or the Chair of Governors as appropriate in the circumstances. The recipient will take all steps within their power to ensure the recommendations are implemented unless there are good reasons for not doing so.

External disclosures

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

22. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate to report concerns to an external body such as a regulator. The College strongly encourages staff to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Public Concern at Work operates a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Confidentiality, protection and support for whistleblowers

23. The College will make every effort to keep an individual's identity secret and only reveal it if necessary to those investigating any concern, the College aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

24. Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern in good faith. If any member of staff believes that someone has suffered any such treatment the Whistleblowing Officer is to be informed immediately. Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

25. A whistleblower disclosing confidential information in the public interest is protected in law from disciplinary action by the College if they acted in good faith with reasonable belief and not for personal gain or out of personal motive. If however, the College concludes that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action.

What if you are dissatisfied by the decision

26. If you are dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or have genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns should be raised in the first instance with your point of contact at the College (as advised under point 15 above). If you remain dissatisfied the matter should be referred to the governing body via the Clerk or Chairman of the Board. If you are still not satisfied you may report it to one of the following:

1) Complaints Team Education & Skills Funding Agency Cheylesmore House Quinton Road Coventry CV1 2WT	
2) The College auditors	RSM UK Audit Ltd Highfield Court Tollgate, Chandlers Ford Eastleigh Hants SO53 3TY Tel: 02380 646 464

Monitoring the Policy

27. Confidential records will be kept by the Whistleblowing Officer of all matters raised through this policy. The Audit Committee will be informed annually whether any disclosures have been made during the year.

Contacts

Whistleblowing Officer	Dave Cartwright Vice Principal Tel: 01962 857500 dcartwright@psc.ac.uk
Principal	Sara Russell Tel: 01962 857527 Principal@psc.ac.uk
Clerk to the Governors	Hilary Walsh Tel: 01962 857526 hwalsh@psc.ac.uk

External Contacts

General guidance	https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing
Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: (020) 7404 6609 whistle@protect-advice.org.uk Website: www.pcaw.org.uk
The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Tel: 01962 876364 Child.protection@hants.gov.uk
The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline	Tel: 0800 800 5000 – the line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Does this policy/procedure impact on equal opportunities within the college? NO

If so, give details and, if appropriate, indicate how these will be ameliorated.

Approved by the Board on 6th October 2014

Owner of Policy: The Clerk

Reviewed: October 2016 – No changes

Reviewed: October 2018

Reviewed: May 2021

Review date: May 2023

