



SIAL.school
Bilingual English/Italian

Whistleblowing Policy

Last Reviewed September 2024

Date of next review September 2025

INTRODUCTION

This policy and procedure has been prepared in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (as amended) (hereafter known as 'the Act') and Department for Education (DfE) guidance for schools.

SIAL is committed to achieving the highest standards of service, including honesty, openness, and accountability. It recognises the hugely important role employees have in achieving that goal.

SIAL will not tolerate any malpractice or wrongdoing in the administration and delivery of its services. The expectation is that employees and others with whom we deal, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work, will come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

This Policy is intended to encourage and enable staff to raise any concerns or suspicions without fear of recrimination, victimisation, discrimination, or disadvantage. If something is troubling you, which you think we should know about, please use this procedure.

This Policy applies to all SIAL employees, but other individuals performing functions in relation to school work, such as peripatetic teachers, agency staff, volunteers, and contractors, are encouraged to use it.

PRINCIPLES

The school will treat all disclosures made under the procedure very seriously and allegations about such matters will be dealt with quickly and with appropriate confidentiality at all times.

The procedure gives protection from victimisation, discrimination, or disadvantage to staff who make such a disclosure in the public interest. This protection applies in respect of such a detriment arising from an act, or a failure to act, either by the employer or by a fellow worker, whether the latter be with or without the employer's knowledge. The procedure also ensures that the person making the disclosure receives an appropriate response and is made aware of how they may pursue the matter outside of the school if the response is not satisfactory.

All employees and workers at the school have a responsibility for whistleblowing. Employees are encouraged to raise serious concerns internally in the first instance rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' externally, and it is preferred that the matter is raised when it is a concern rather than waiting for proof.

This policy should be used for concerns about:

- a criminal offence (e.g. fraud, corruption, sexual or physical abuse of pupils/students or others);
- a failure by a person to comply with any legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- a danger to the health or safety of any individual;

- any failure to comply with appropriate professional standards;
- fraud, corruption or dishonesty;
- actions likely to cause physical/mental/psychological harm or risk of significant property damage;
- discrimination in the provision of education;
- any other matter that staff believe they cannot raise through another procedure.

This policy is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by the school, nor may it be used to reconsider any matters already addressed under complaint or disciplinary procedures. Disclosures made outside of the arrangements set out in this policy will not be protected under it and may not be protected under the Act.

PROTECTION

The school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect individuals who raise a concern, even if they are genuinely mistaken. Any such harassment or victimisation will result in disciplinary action.

Any whistleblowing investigation will remain independent of other ongoing procedures involving the employee/worker.

If a concern is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee/worker. However, if it is found that the concern was raised maliciously, frivolously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All concerns will be treated in confidence, and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of employees/workers if they so wish. At the appropriate time, however, individuals may need to come forward as witnesses. Employees/workers also have a duty to observe this confidentiality.

The school will handle all personal data and investigation records in line with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 requirements.

ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

Anonymous concerns are less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the school. When deciding whether to investigate such concerns, factors considered will include:

- the seriousness of the issue raised,
 - the credibility of the concern, and
 - the likelihood of confirming the allegation through other sources.
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UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

If an allegation is made in good faith but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken. However, if it is determined the allegation was made maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary procedures may be followed.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

Employees/workers should, where possible, raise concerns internally with the Head Teacher, either verbally or in writing. Where the concern relates to the Head Teacher, it should be raised with the Chair of Governors.

The Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors) will arrange to meet the employee/worker as soon as practicable, recording key details including the employee's/worker's name, the nature of the concern, and whether confidentiality is requested.

It may not always be possible to guarantee confidentiality; the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors) will advise the employee/worker if this becomes the case. Employees will have the option to withdraw or proceed.

A colleague or trade union representative may accompany the employee to meetings under this policy. The confidentiality of disclosures and any investigation must be respected by all involved.

A written summary of the concern and the proposed course of action will be provided to the employee/worker following the meeting.

CONCERNS RELATING TO GOVERNORS

If the concern is about a Governor, it should be raised with the Chair of Governors. If the concern is about the Chair of Governors, it should be escalated to the Local Authority.

INVESTIGATING A DISCLOSURE

An initial assessment will be carried out within 10 working days to determine the appropriate next steps. The employee/worker will be informed of the outcome of the assessment and may be required to provide further information.

Some concerns, such as those related to safeguarding or criminal activity, may be referred to an external agency before any internal investigation proceeds.

An investigator or team may be appointed with appropriate expertise. Any recommendations for change arising from the investigation will be shared with leadership to prevent recurrence of wrongdoing.

Updates on the investigation's progress and expected timeline will be provided where possible, although confidentiality may limit the detail shared.

Any employee making false allegations maliciously or in bad faith may be subject to disciplinary action.

EXTERNAL DISCLOSURE

If concerns are not addressed internally, employees/workers may contact:

- The Local Authority
- A Prescribed Person or Body such as Ofsted, the Education and Skills Funding Agency, or the Children's Commissioner.

See the official government list for more information:

 Whistleblowing: List of Prescribed People and Bodies

REPORT TO GOVERNING BODY

The Head Teacher will report the outcomes of whistleblowing investigations to the Governing Body, anonymised where necessary, including any actions taken as a result.

SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Employees/workers are encouraged to seek guidance and support from their trade union.

They may also contact the independent whistleblowing charity Protect:

- Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk
- Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk
- Telephone: 020 3117 2520

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current legislation and best practice.