



Policy No: 1.3a

APPLEFORD SCHOOL WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

We have a whole school approach to safeguarding, which is the golden thread that runs throughout every aspect of the school. All our school policies support our approach to safeguarding (child protection). Our fundamental priority is our children and their wellbeing; this is first and foremost.

This policy, which applies to the whole school, is publicly available on the school website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the School Office.

Scope: All who work, volunteer or supply services to our school have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this policy and its procedures both within and outside of normal school hours, including activities away from school. All new employees and volunteers are required to state that they have read, understood and will abide by this policy and its procedural documents and confirm this by signing the *Policies Register*.

Legal Status: Complies with The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations currently in force. The key piece of whistleblowing legislation is the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) which applies to almost all workers and employees who ordinarily work in Great Britain. The situations covered include criminal offences, risks to health and safety, failure to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice and environmental damage. Employees and workers who make a 'protected disclosure' are protected from being treated badly or being dismissed. For a disclosure to be protected it must be made to an appropriate body. For example, disclosing a health and safety issue to the Health and Safety Executive is likely to be protected, but not if the concern was disclosed to the media.

Monitoring and Review: These arrangements are subject to continuous monitoring, refinement, and audit by the Headmaster. The Proprietor will undertake a full annual review of this document, inclusive of its implementation and the efficiency with which the related duties have been implemented. This review will be formally documented in writing. Any deficiencies or weaknesses recognised in arrangements or procedures will be remedied immediately and without delay. All staff will be informed of the updated/reviewed arrangements and it will be made available to them in writing or electronically.

Signed:

Policy Agreed: September 2024

Date Published: September 2024

Next Review: September 2025

Dr Peter Gardner (Proprietor and Managing Director)

Mr David King (Headmaster and Company Director)

We explicitly require staff to report to the Headmaster of Appleford School any concern or allegation about School practices or the behaviour of colleagues which are likely to put pupils at risk of abuse or other serious harm. Where the headmaster is subject to these procedures, it will be managed by the Managing Director/ Proprietor, whose contact details are available from the school office.

Introduction: Appleford School is required to have appropriate procedures in place for handling whistleblowing and for ensuring school staff and volunteers know who they can contact if they wish to raise a concern. This document explains the types of concerns that can be raised under this procedure, the legal protection for whistle-blowers and how whistleblowing concerns will be handled. This procedure should be followed for any whistleblowing matters raised by employees of the school, volunteers, supply staff and agency workers.

The term 'headmaster and head teacher ' have been used throughout this procedure, however depending on the size and structure of the school the headmaster's role in the procedure may be delegated to the acting head. Where the headmaster is subject to these procedures, it will be managed by the Proprietor.

Policy Statement: Wiltshire Council and Appleford School are committed to the highest possible standards of:

- openness and inclusiveness
- accountability and
- integrity.

What is Whistleblowing? Whistleblowing is when an employee or volunteer raises concerns about poor or unsafe practice, misconduct and/or potential failures in Appleford School's systems and processes. The wrongdoing disclosed must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, e.g., pupils, general public

The wrongdoing must relate to or show one of the following:

- a criminal offence
- a failure to comply with a legal obligation
- a possible miscarriage of justice
- a Health & Safety risk
- actions causing, or likely to cause damage to the environment
- misuse of public money
- corruption or unethical conduct
- failing to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- deliberate concealment of any of these matters
- any other substantial and relevant concern.

The concern could be about something that happened in the past, is currently happening or likely to happen in the future.

Concerns or complaints that employees wish to raise formally, about their own employment, should normally be raised using Appleford School's Grievance Procedure, unless the employee believes the concern is in the public interest. This includes for example, concerns related to working conditions, working relations, employment rights or bullying or harassment.

Aim of procedure:

- Encourage those working and volunteering in Appleford School to report suspected wrongdoing promptly, in the knowledge that it will be taken seriously.
- Provide guidance on how to raise concerns
- Reassure staff that they are able to raise genuine concerns made in the public interest without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken
- Appropriate whistleblowing procedures should be put in place for such concerns to be raised with Appleford School's Head teacher, acting head or proprietor.

Legal protection for whistle blowers: It can be difficult for an employee or worker to make the decision to report a concern. If a concern is raised in good faith and based on reasonable belief, there should be nothing to fear. Appleford School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect an individual when they raise a concern even if they are genuinely mistaken in their concerns. Any harassment or victimisation of a whistleblower would result in disciplinary action against the person responsible.

Under The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998, workers are protected from dismissal or other detriment as long as they follow their employers whistleblowing procedure. Any investigations arising from whistleblowing will not influence or be influenced by any other procedures to which an employee may be subject.

False and malicious allegations: Appleford School will protect itself and its employees from false and malicious expressions of concern by taking disciplinary action where appropriate. Appleford School will try to ensure that the negative impact of either malicious or unfounded allegation about any person is minimised.

Procedure for raising a whistleblowing concern:

- Whistleblowing anonymously or confidentially
- Concerns can be raised anonymously, but Appleford School or person receiving the allegation may not be able to take it further if they haven't been provided with all the information they need.

- Whistle blowers can give their name but request confidentiality and, in these circumstances, every effort will be made to protect their identity.
- Where an employee has requested that their identity is not to be revealed, Appleford School will discuss the matter with them before embarking on any course of action whereby their identity will need to be disclosed.
- All disclosures made under this procedure will be treated sensitively, consistently, and fairly.

Step 1- Reporting the concern: Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing. You can raise the matter with the headteacher. In the absence of the head teacher then raise the matter with the acting head.

If you are raising a concern about the headteacher then the matter should go directly to the Proprietor.

Where a staff member or volunteer feels unable to raise an issue with their employer, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels are open to them: If you wish to report the matter to someone outside of Appleford School, you can contact:

- the Head of School Effectiveness at Wiltshire Council or
- any of the other local authority officers listed in Annex 1 or
- one of the external bodies/organisations listed in Annex 2.
- the [NSPCC's whistleblowing helpline](https://www.nspcc.org.uk) – it is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally, or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled by their school or college. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Reporting concerns to the media, in most cases will lead to the loss of your whistleblowing law rights. Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of your concerns, you will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient evidence or other reasonable grounds to raise them. You may wish to obtain advice from a trade union representative or the Citizen's Advice Bureau. You can be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague to any meetings that are required.

Step 2: The person with whom you have raised your concern, will decide what action is needed. They may ask you to provide further information. They will write to you within 10 working days to let you know how your concern will be dealt with. The information you can expect to receive is:

- an indication of how the concern will be dealt with;
- an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- whether further investigations will take place, and if not why;
- information about support available for you.

The person with whom you have raised your concern will at the same time notify Appleford Schools' HR Adviser that a whistleblowing allegation has been made. Advice on dealing with concerns is available from Appleford School's HR Adviser, legal or financial adviser.

Step 3: Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate. An investigation may be carried out, depending on the nature of the allegations and the evidence/information presented. Full details of the investigation may be withheld from you to protect the confidentiality of other people. Information will need to be passed on to those with a legitimate need to have this information and it may be necessary for you to provide a written statement and act as a witness in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings or enquiry. This will be discussed with you first. Where an investigation is necessary, it may take the form of one or more of the following:

- an internal investigation by the headmaster or a governor, which may, for example, take the form of a disciplinary investigation
- an investigation by the Internal Audit Service
- a referral to the Police
- the setting up of an external independent inquiry.

Step 4: You will be informed of the outcome of any investigation, in writing, and/or of any action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law. If you do not feel your concern has been addressed adequately you may raise it with an independent body such as:

- the Headmaster of Appleford School Effectiveness at Wiltshire Council or
- any of the other local authority officers listed in Annex 1 or
- one of the external bodies/organisations listed in Annex 2.

If there is an issue of an exceptionally serious nature which you believe to be substantially true, then you may disclose the issue to someone other than those listed in step 1 page 3 . In determining whether it is reasonable for you to have made a disclosure the identity of the person to whom the disclosure is made will be taken into account. Disclosures to anyone outside of the recognised bodies listed in paragraphs 35 and Annex 1 and 2 may not be protected disclosures under the Act.

You have a duty to Appleford School not to disclose confidential information. This does not prevent you from seeking independent advice at any stage or from discussing the issue with the charity Protect (previously called Public Concern at Work) on 020 3117 2520 or www.protect-advice.org.uk in accordance with the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Review and Reporting of the Procedure: For maintained and voluntary controlled schools Human Resources have overall responsibility for this procedure. For voluntary aided and foundation schools the responsibility will lie with the Governing Body, and for academies with the Academy Trust.

This procedure has been reviewed with reference to equalities, human rights and discrimination legislation. Confidential monitoring of the procedures is undertaken in order to gather data to help establish whether the procedure is operated in a fair and consistent manner. In undertaking monitoring Appleford School will not identify individuals. This procedure will be regularly reviewed by the HR Department to ensure that it continues to remain compliant and meets the needs of schools and those working in schools.

Annex 1 - Contact list for Wiltshire County Council

Address:	Wiltshire Council, County Hall
HR Operations Manager	Jane.margetts@wiltshire.gov.uk
Director of Education and Skills	kathryn.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk
Head of School Effectiveness	amanda.butler@wiltshire.gov.uk
Health and Safety Team for Schools	sanjay.dhir@wiltshire.gov.uk
Strategic Financial Support Manager Finance & Procurement	Grant.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk

Annex 2 - External bodies and organisations

You can blow the whistle to an external organisation rather than your employer. There is a list of prescribed people or bodies that you can go to.

Choose the correct one for your issue. A full list can be found online at Gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies>

Some of the bodies that may be relevant for Appleford School staff are:

- **Ofsted**

WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 3155
Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

- **Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation**

Complaints Investigation Manager, Ofqual, Earlsdon Park, 53-55 Butts Road, Coventry, CV1 3BH.
Tel: 0300 303 3344

Email: whistleblowing@ofqual.gov.uk Online reform form: www.ofqual.gov.uk/complaints-and-appeals/whistleblowing/

- **National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)**

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line is for anyone with child protection concerns in the workplace. The helpline provides support and advice to those who feel unable to get a child protection issue addressed by their employer. It can be contacted anonymously on 0800 028 0285.
[NSPCC's whistleblowing helpline](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/whistleblowing)

- **Health and Safety Executive**

Tel: 0300 790 6787
www.hse.gov.uk

- **The Local Government Ombudsman**

Address: PO Box 4771, Coventry. CV4 0EH

Appleford School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils fulfil their potential.

www.lgo.org.uk

Tel: 0300 061 0614

- **Data Protection and Freedom of Information**

The Office of the Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113

- **Secretary of State for Education**

Ministerial and Public Communications Division, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Tel: 0370 000 2288

Website: www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

- **Equality and Human Rights Commission**

Tel: 0161 829 8100

Email: whistleblowing@equalityhumanrights.com

Website: www.equalityhumanrights.com/whistleblowing