



## **Whistleblowing Policy 2026-2028**

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<b>Approved by: Full Governing Body</b>	
<b>Last Review date: April 2026</b>	<b>Next Review: March 2028</b>

## **Purpose of the Policy**

This policy provides a clear procedure for reporting concerns about wrongdoing, risks, or malpractice within the school. The school is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, and accountability. All individuals connected to the school should feel able to raise concerns without fear of detriment.

## **Key Principles**

The school is committed to an inclusive culture and ethos with a strong sense of belonging and community. The school will always:

- Do what is right.
- Ensure concerns related to safeguarding are prioritized and follow the procedures laid out in the school's **Safeguarding Policy (2025-2026)**.
- Focus on delivering high-quality education with land-based specialism.
- Work tirelessly to ensure that all its stakeholders have the conditions in which they can thrive.
- Have a culture of support to enable stakeholders to overcome any potential barriers they may face.

The school encourages an atmosphere where concerns can be raised safely: openness, accountability, and transparency are fundamental to this.

Any individuals raising concerns in good faith are protected from victimisation. Their concerns will be handled sensitively and, where possible, confidentially. Furthermore, these concerns will be investigated impartially.

## **Equality Impact Statement**

The school applies this policy fairly in line with the Equality Act 2010

## **Scope of the Policy**

This policy applies to employees, volunteers, governors, contractors, agency workers, and trainees. It covers concerns such as safeguarding risks, criminal offences, misconduct, breaches of law, health and safety dangers, fraud, neglect of pupils, and concealment of wrongdoing.

## **Definition of Whistleblowing**

Whistleblowing is a genuine action an individual takes to report wrongdoing at work that affects others. The Law provides protection for those that fall under the scope of the policy who raises a genuine concern about a specified matter(s). These are called qualifying disclosures. A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest by those covered in the policy who have a genuine and reasonable belief that:

- A criminal offence may have been committed.
- There has been a possible failure to comply with a legal obligation.
- There may be a failure to comply with financial management procedures.
- There has been a likely miscarriage of justice.
- The Health & Safety of self and others is at risk.
- There has been potential damage to the environment.

**Nobody will be victimised for whistleblowing. This means that continued employment opportunities will not be prejudiced after raising legitimate concern.**

It is also important to ensure that the policy is not misused. The following examples of actions that would be considered as disciplinary offences:

- False or malicious allegations.
- Victimisation of anybody for whistleblowing.
- An instruction to cover up potential wrongdoing.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- The **Governing Body** is responsible for approving this policy, monitoring its effectiveness, and ensuring that it is published on the **school's website**. The Governing Body will ensure that there is a governor who other staff can contact to report concerns; this can be arranged by contacting the Clerk to Governors.

[clerktogovernors@dorsetstudioschool.co.uk](mailto:clerktogovernors@dorsetstudioschool.co.uk)

- The Principal is responsible for the promotion of the policy and to ensure that any investigations are dealt with in a timely manner.
- If the **Governing Body** deems it necessary, they will appoint a Designated Whistleblowing Officer to act as an independent contact and ensure fair process.
- All stakeholders have a duty to report concerns in good faith.
- External Agencies may be involved when concerns are serious.

## **Safeguarding and Child Protection**

Concerns involving child safety and welfare must follow the school's **Safeguarding Policy (2025-2026)**. Safeguarding procedures run alongside whistleblowing procedures.

### **Procedure for Raising a Concern**

**The internal procedure for raising concern should follow the steps outlined below:**

#### **Step 1**

Anyone thinking of making a qualifying disclosure should consider the policy section on '**The definition of whistleblowing**'. This disclosure should be reported to the Principal. If the disclosure is about the Principal, then the matter should be reported to the **Chair of Governors** at the following address:

[clerktogovernors@dorsetstudioschool.co.uk](mailto:clerktogovernors@dorsetstudioschool.co.uk)

Wherever possible, the disclosure should be made in writing. This should include the name(s) of those believed to be committing the wrongdoing, relevant dates, places, and as much contextual information as possible.

#### **Step 2**

The school will acknowledge receipt of the qualifying disclosure **within five school days** and determine the appropriate course of action.

#### **Step 3**

An appropriate investigation will be carried out impartially. In most cases, the Principal or another appropriate senior leader may undertake a preliminary investigation, which may be sufficient to determine response and resolution. This will include a collation of all relevant evidence, including interview and witness statements. Serious cases may result in further escalation to the named governor and/or any regulatory body or appropriate government department.

When a meeting occurs as part of the investigation process, the individual raising the concern may be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or another professional association representative. It will be reiterated that the individual will be protected from any potential victimisation.

#### **Step 4**

On conclusion of the investigation, the individual who raised the concern through a qualifying disclosure will be advised of the outcome(s) of the investigation. If no further action is taken, the rationale for this decision will be shared with the individual.

If disciplinary action is required, the leader investigating the matter will follow the process and procedure in the school's **Staff Disciplinary Policy**.

**If the individual is dissatisfied with the outcome, and believes that appropriate action has not been taken, they should report the matter to the proper authority or person. This will mean an external process has been triggered.**

Legislation sets out the prescribed authorities and people to which qualifying disclosures can be made, including:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer (the 'LADO')
- HM Revenue & Customs
- Competition & Markets Authority
- Health & Safety Executive
- Environment Agency
- Independent Office for Police Conduct
- Serious Fraud Office

Whistleblowers can also make disclosure to Ofsted:

[whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk)

#### **Monitoring and Review**

Policy reviewed every two years or sooner if required.

### Appendix 1: Whistleblowing flowchart

