

Ambleford School Whistleblowing Policy

Reviewed: September 2025

Next Review: August 2026 (or sooner if required by statutory updates)

1. Introduction

Ambleford School is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, and accountability. We expect all members of our community to act honestly and to raise concerns if they believe that practices within the school are unsafe, unlawful, or not in line with the school's values. This Whistleblowing Policy provides a framework for staff, volunteers, contractors, and other stakeholders to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisal. It is an important part of our safeguarding culture, ensuring that any risks to children's welfare are identified and addressed swiftly.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to encourage individuals to raise concerns about wrongdoing or malpractice at the earliest opportunity, to ensure that such concerns are addressed appropriately, and to provide protection for those who do so. The policy is not intended to replace other procedures such as the Staff Grievance or Complaints Policies but specifically covers concerns that are in the public interest.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the school community, including employees, volunteers, governors, contractors, and agency staff. It covers concerns relating to:

Safeguarding or child protection failures.

Unsafe practices that may put children, staff, or visitors at risk.

Criminal activity.

Financial impropriety or fraud.

Breaches of legal or regulatory obligations.

Discrimination, harassment, or victimisation.

Attempts to conceal wrongdoing.

4. Safeguarding and Whistleblowing

All staff have a duty to act if they believe that safeguarding practices are inadequate or that a child is at risk of harm. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025) makes clear that whistleblowing is an essential part of safeguarding culture. Where a staff member feels unable to raise a safeguarding concern internally, or believes their concerns are not being addressed, they must contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline (0800 028 0285), or Ofsted.

5. Raising a Concern

Concerns should normally be raised with the Headteacher or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). If the concern relates to the Headteacher, it should be reported directly to the LADO. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing, and should include as much detail as possible, including names, dates, locations, and any evidence. Anonymous concerns will be considered, although they may be more difficult to investigate fully.

6. How Concerns Will Be Handled

All concerns raised under this policy will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly. The person receiving the concern will acknowledge it within five school days and initiate an investigation. The investigation may involve interviews, review of documents, and consultation with external agencies if appropriate. The outcome will be communicated to the whistleblower, taking into account confidentiality and legal constraints.

If the concern is substantiated, the school will take corrective action, which may include disciplinary procedures, referral to safeguarding partners, or reporting to external authorities. Where concerns are not substantiated, the school will provide an explanation while ensuring that no retaliatory action is taken against the whistleblower.

7. Protection for Whistleblowers

Ambleford School is committed to protecting whistleblowers from harassment, victimisation, or disadvantage as a result of raising a concern in good faith. Retaliation against a whistleblower will be treated as a disciplinary offence. Protection is provided under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which gives legal rights to individuals who disclose information reasonably and in the public interest.

8. Malicious or Vexatious Allegations

While all concerns are encouraged, the school will not tolerate deliberate misuse of this policy. Malicious or vexatious allegations, made with the intent to cause harm, may result in disciplinary

action. However, no action will be taken against an individual who raises a concern in good faith, even if it is later found to be unfounded.

9. Training and Awareness

All staff receive training on whistleblowing procedures as part of their induction and through regular safeguarding updates. The policy is reinforced through staff meetings and briefings to ensure that all members of the community are aware of how to raise concerns and where to seek support.

10. Monitoring and Review

The Directors are responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and for reviewing its effectiveness annually, or sooner if required by changes in statutory guidance. Lessons learned from whistleblowing cases are used to strengthen policies, procedures, and practice.

11. Policy Availability

This Whistleblowing Policy is available on the school website and in the staff handbook. It is also available in print on request. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to read it carefully and to familiarise themselves with the reporting routes.

Conclusion

Amblesford School is dedicated to creating a culture where concerns can be raised openly and safely. By ensuring that whistleblowers are listened to, protected, and supported, the school promotes accountability, transparency, and the highest standards of safeguarding and professional conduct.