



Adventure Wellbeing School

Whistleblowing Policy

Policy Document	Whistleblowing Policy
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1. Introduction and Purpose

Adventure Wellbeing School (AWS) is committed to fostering a transparent, safe, and ethical environment for all students and staff within a physical school setting. Our Whistle-Blowing Policy empowers all members of the AWS community - including staff, volunteers, contractors, and associated individuals—to report any concerns regarding misconduct, safeguarding violations, financial irregularities, or policy breaches without fear of reprisal. This policy reinforces AWS’s steadfast commitment to

upholding high standards of accountability and ethical behaviour, particularly critical in ensuring the safety and well-being of students in a physical school context.

This Whistle-blowing Policy outlines a secure and accessible process for raising concerns, ensuring that any misconduct or issue that may impact the safety and well-being of students is addressed promptly and appropriately. This policy safeguards AWS's reputation as an inclusive and responsible educational institution while emphasising the school's dedication to the wellbeing of all students, especially those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

Whistle-Blowing as a Safeguarding Tool

Whistle-blowing serves as a proactive mechanism, enabling individuals to report issues before they escalate into significant risks. AWS recognises the essential role whistle-blowing plays in identifying early signs of misconduct, safeguarding issues, or any behaviour that may contravene AWS's values and legal obligations. By promoting an environment where individuals feel encouraged to raise concerns, AWS fosters a culture of transparency, accountability, and collective responsibility. This is vital in maintaining a safe, inclusive, and supportive school community.

Key Legislation and Compliance Standards

The Whistle-Blowing Policy at AWS is grounded in multiple legal frameworks and government regulations to ensure whistle-blowers are protected and that the school's governance practices meet high ethical and safeguarding standards. This policy is aligned with the following key legislation and regulatory requirements:

1. **Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998:** Provides legal protections for whistle-blowers, ensuring they can report concerns in good faith without fear of retaliation.
2. **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024:** Reinforces that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, with particular emphasis on protecting vulnerable students in primary school settings.
3. **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2024):** Highlights the necessity of robust reporting protocols and collaboration with safeguarding agencies, ensuring adherence to best practices in child protection.
4. **Employment Rights Act 1996:** Protects employees from unfair dismissal or detriment resulting from reporting concerns in the public interest.
5. **Data Protection Act 2018 & General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):** Ensures personal and sensitive information handled during a whistle-blowing investigation is protected.

AWS is committed to aligning its policies with the guidance of regulatory bodies such as Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE), and local safeguarding authorities. In developing this policy, AWS has drawn upon resources from organisations like the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) to ensure compliance with best practice standards in the education sector.

Through this policy, AWS demonstrates its dedication to fostering a safe, transparent, and accountable school community where every member feels empowered to report concerns that could impact the school's integrity, ethics, or students' safety.

2. Policy Objectives and Scope

Objectives

The Whistle-Blowing Policy at Adventure Wellbeing School (AWS) is designed to promote a culture of accountability and transparency by achieving the following objectives:

1. **Provide a Clear and Confidential Procedure:** Establish a straightforward and confidential process for raising concerns related to illegal, unsafe, or unethical practices within AWS, ensuring that individuals feel secure when reporting issues.
2. **Safeguard Student Well-being:** Prioritise student safety, particularly for those with SEND or SEMH needs. Open communication ensures that any practice or behaviour posing a potential risk to students is reported swiftly and addressed appropriately.
3. **Protect Whistle-Blowers from Retaliation:** Offer protection against retaliation to those who report concerns in good faith, treating all disclosures with respect and confidentiality to foster a supportive reporting environment.

4. **Ensure Legal Compliance:** Maintain adherence to key regulations, including the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA), Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), and other relevant standards, safeguarding AWS's commitment to lawful, ethical governance.

Scope

This policy applies to all AWS staff, including teachers, support staff, volunteers, contractors, and third parties associated with the school. It covers disclosures related to:

- **Safeguarding Breaches and Misconduct:** Actions or behaviours endangering student welfare or breaching AWS's safeguarding protocols.
- **Unethical, Illegal, or Policy Violations:** Incidents of misconduct, unethical practices, or breaches of school policies, particularly those impacting the safety or education of SEND and SEMH students.
- **Specific Issues:** Reports concerning child welfare, breaches of student privacy, data protection violations, and other issues compromising AWS's integrity or standards.

Exclusions

This whistle-blowing policy does not cover:

- **Personal Grievances:** Issues related to employment terms or personal disputes not involving misconduct or child welfare should be addressed through the Grievance Procedure.
- **Minor Interpersonal Issues:** Disputes between individuals not involving significant breaches of AWS's standards or policies.
- **External Complaints:** Concerns regarding organisations or third parties not directly involved in AWS's operations.

By clearly defining the policy's scope, AWS ensures this whistle-blowing policy focuses effectively on issues that may impact the school's ethical integrity, student safety, or regulatory compliance.

I will now proceed to adapt the **Legal Framework and Standards Compliance** section.

Here is the adapted **Legal Framework and Standards Compliance** section:

3. Legal Framework and Standards Compliance

Legal Foundations of Whistle-Blowing Protection

The whistle-blowing procedures at Adventure Wellbeing School (AWS) are grounded in key legal frameworks that protect those reporting concerns and uphold the school's mission of creating a safe and ethical learning environment, especially for SEND and SEMH students. Compliance with these legal standards reinforces AWS's commitment to transparency, accountability, and child protection.

1. Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998

PIDA provides legal safeguards to those reporting specific types of wrongdoing. Disclosures are protected when they are made in the public interest and relate to:

- **Criminal Offences:** Reporting actions constituting criminal behaviour, such as financial misconduct or safeguarding breaches.
- **Health and Safety Risks:** Concerns about unsafe practices that could harm students or staff, especially vital in a physical school setting catering to SEND and SEMH students.
- **Financial Irregularities or Misuse of Funds:** Ensuring accountability for public or tuition-based funding.
- **Ethical Misconduct or Environmental Harm:** Reporting practices that contravene AWS's values or ethical standards.

PIDA ensures whistle-blowers are shielded from retaliation, fostering a safe and supportive environment for reporting.

2. **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2024)**

This guidance mandates cooperation with local authorities and safeguarding agencies, requiring AWS to:

- Adhere to Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) protocols.
- Collaborate with external safeguarding bodies for timely and effective responses to concerns.
- Maintain robust safeguarding policies, particularly for vulnerable groups like SEND students.

3. **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025**

AWS complies with KCSIE's statutory requirements to:

- Investigate safeguarding concerns thoroughly.
- Protect SEND and SEMH students with tailored measures.
- Provide ongoing safeguarding training for all staff.

4. **Employment Rights Act 1996**

This Act ensures employees who report concerns in the public interest are not subjected to dismissal or detriment, underpinning AWS's commitment to fostering an open culture for reporting.

5. **Data Protection Act 2018 & General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

AWS ensures whistle-blowing investigations respect personal data privacy by:

- Storing investigation records securely and granting access only to authorised personnel.
- Conducting investigations in a manner that safeguards confidentiality for all parties.

Compliance Standards and Best Practices

AWS aligns its whistle-blowing policy with guidance from organisations and standards, including:

- **Ofsted:** Upholding best practices in safeguarding and governance.
- **Local Safeguarding Authorities:** Adhering to their procedures for addressing safeguarding disclosures.
- **SCIES and EEF Guidance:** Incorporating expert safeguarding and SEND-specific recommendations.
- **NSPCC and Protect:** Supporting whistle-blowers with external resources for advice and protection.

By adhering to these legal and ethical frameworks, AWS ensures a transparent, compliant, and inclusive educational environment for all stakeholders, with particular attention to the safety of SEND and SEMH students.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities within the Whistle-Blowing Policy at Adventure Wellbeing School (AWS) are clearly defined to ensure its effective implementation. This structure supports accountability and fosters a culture of safety, transparency, and ethical conduct, particularly for protecting SEND and SEMH students.

Proprietary Body

The Proprietary Body serves as the ultimate governing authority at AWS and oversees the Whistle-Blowing Policy to ensure compliance and effectiveness. Specific responsibilities include:

- **Oversight and Accountability:** Ensuring that the policy aligns with legal and educational standards, including the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998 and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024.
- **Resource Allocation:** Providing the necessary resources for thorough investigations, including access to safeguarding, legal, and HR expertise.
- **Policy Review:** Conducting regular reviews to maintain the policy's relevance and efficacy, addressing systemic issues identified through whistle-blowing cases.
- **Support for Leadership:** Collaborating with the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to promote a transparent, ethical culture across the school.

Headteacher

The Headteacher holds primary responsibility for implementing the Whistle-Blowing Policy and managing disclosures. Duties include:

- **Primary Contact for Disclosures:** Serving as the main point of contact for whistle-blowing concerns, ensuring confidentiality and respect for all disclosures.
- **Managing Investigations:** Overseeing the investigation process, consulting legal or safeguarding professionals as necessary, and maintaining comprehensive records.
- **Assuring Protection:** Guaranteeing that whistle-blowers are protected from retaliation in accordance with PIDA, fostering trust within the school community.
- **Reporting to the Proprietary Body:** Keeping the Proprietary Body informed of trends or critical issues arising from whistle-blowing cases.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The SLT supports the Headteacher in promoting an ethical, accountable culture and ensuring staff understand and adhere to the Whistle-Blowing Policy. Responsibilities include:

- **Encouraging Transparency:** Creating an environment where staff feel safe to raise concerns.
- **Organising Training:** Providing regular training tailored to safeguarding and SEND-specific issues to ensure staff are well-equipped to identify and report concerns.
- **Reinforcing Policy Compliance:** Ensuring all staff adhere to AWS's safeguarding and whistle-blowing procedures.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The DSL and LADO are pivotal in managing disclosures related to safeguarding. Their roles include:

- **Coordinating Responses:** Collaborating with the Headteacher to address safeguarding concerns raised through whistle-blowing promptly.
- **LADO Referrals:** Reporting cases involving potential abuse or misconduct affecting students to the LADO.
- **Protecting Vulnerable Students:** Prioritising the safety of SEND and SEMH students in all safeguarding responses.

Staff Members and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers are expected to uphold the school's values and actively contribute to a safe, ethical environment. Their responsibilities include:

- **Duty to Report:** Reporting any concerns about misconduct, safeguarding breaches, or unethical behaviour.
- **Awareness of Rights:** Understanding the protections offered under PIDA and AWS's commitment to supporting whistle-blowers.
- **Engagement in Training:** Participating in whistle-blowing and safeguarding training to remain informed about reporting procedures.

Whistle-Blowers

Whistle-blowers play a vital role in maintaining the safety and integrity of AWS. Their responsibilities include:

- **Good Faith Reporting:** Reporting concerns honestly, with the intention of supporting AWS in resolving issues.
- **Anonymity and Cooperation:** While anonymous reports are accepted, whistle-blowers are encouraged to cooperate with investigations to ensure thorough resolution.

External Authorities and Partner Agencies

In certain cases, AWS collaborates with external authorities and agencies, such as Ofsted, NSPCC, and the LADO, to address significant concerns, particularly those involving safeguarding or regulatory compliance.

- **LADO Collaboration:** Working with the LADO to handle serious safeguarding disclosures effectively.
- **External Whistle-Blowing Resources:** Encouraging staff to access support from Protect or the NSPCC for additional guidance.

5. Reporting Procedures

The reporting procedures at Adventure Wellbeing School (AWS) provide a clear, accessible, and secure process for staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders to report concerns about misconduct, safeguarding breaches, unethical behaviour, or policy violations. These procedures ensure issues are reported and addressed effectively, with options for anonymity and confidentiality to protect whistle-blowers.

Internal Reporting Procedures

AWS encourages concerns to be raised internally, ensuring swift resolution through established structures. The internal process includes:

1. **Initial Reporting to Supervisors**
Staff are encouraged to first raise concerns with their immediate supervisor, who can provide guidance or address the issue promptly.
2. **Escalation to the Headteacher**
If the issue is not resolved, or if the whistle-blower is uncomfortable reporting to their supervisor, concerns can be escalated directly to the Headteacher. The Headteacher is the primary contact for whistle-blowing matters and ensures all concerns are handled confidentially and appropriately.
3. **Direct Reporting to the Proprietary Body**
For cases involving senior management or if there is a perceived conflict of interest, concerns may be reported directly to the Proprietary Body. This ensures impartial handling of sensitive issues.
4. **Documentation**
Whistle-blowers are encouraged to document the nature of their concern, including key dates, events, and involved individuals. This aids in the investigation process and ensures critical details are recorded.

External Reporting Options

If internal reporting channels are deemed ineffective or inappropriate, AWS supports whistle-blowers in accessing external reporting avenues:

- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline**
Staff can contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline at 0800 028 0285 for advice and support regarding child welfare or safeguarding concerns.
- **Protect (formerly PCAW)**
Protect offers free, confidential advice for those uncertain about whistle-blowing procedures or protections under PIDA.
- **Local Safeguarding Authorities**
Whistle-blowers can report directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or Ofsted for significant safeguarding concerns or regulatory breaches.

These external options ensure that whistle-blowers have access to appropriate support beyond the school.

Use of Anonymous Reporting

AWS recognises that some individuals may prefer to report concerns anonymously. Procedures for handling anonymous reports include:

- **Assessment of Reports**
Anonymous reports are carefully evaluated based on their credibility and the evidence provided. While anonymity may limit the investigation, all reports are treated seriously.

- **Encouragement to Disclose Identity**

Whistle-blowers are encouraged to provide their identity to facilitate comprehensive investigations, but AWS respects their choice to remain anonymous.

Confidentiality Protections

Maintaining confidentiality is central to AWS's whistle-blowing procedures. Protections include:

1. **Limited Information Sharing**

Details of a concern are only disclosed to individuals directly involved in the investigation or those required to take action.

2. **Data Protection Compliance**

Personal data related to whistle-blowing is managed securely and in compliance with GDPR, with restricted access to authorised personnel.

3. **Non-Retaliation Commitment**

AWS prohibits retaliation against whistle-blowers, safeguarding their rights and encouraging a culture of openness.

Documentation Requirements

AWS maintains detailed records of whistle-blowing cases to ensure accountability and regulatory compliance. Requirements include:

- **Record-Keeping**

The Headteacher is responsible for maintaining accurate records of all reports, including actions taken and outcomes.

- **Investigation Logs**

Investigation steps, findings, and decisions are documented comprehensively while ensuring confidentiality.

Follow-Up and Feedback Mechanisms

AWS is committed to transparency and supports whistle-blowers through feedback and follow-up processes:

1. **Informing Whistle-Blowers**

Whistle-blowers are informed of investigation outcomes in general terms, without compromising confidentiality.

2. **Continuous Improvement**

Feedback from whistle-blowing cases is used to refine policies and improve training, reinforcing AWS's commitment to a safe and ethical school environment.

6. Investigative Procedures

Adventure Wellbeing School (AWS) is committed to conducting thorough, unbiased investigations into all whistle-blowing disclosures. The investigative procedures ensure that concerns are addressed diligently, transparently, and in compliance with safeguarding and legal standards. Investigations aim to minimise disruption while respecting confidentiality and protecting the rights of all parties involved.

Initial Assessment of the Disclosure

Upon receiving a whistle-blowing report, the Headteacher or a designated member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) undertakes a preliminary assessment to determine the nature and urgency of the concern. Key steps include:

1. **Determining the Concern**

Identifying whether the disclosure relates to safeguarding, misconduct, financial irregularities, or breaches of AWS policies.

2. **Immediate Safeguarding Actions**

If the report raises safeguarding concerns, it is escalated to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Serious cases involving potential abuse or harm are immediately referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

3. **Risk Level Assessment**

Evaluating the level of risk and urgency to prioritise action, especially where the student is involved.

Planning and Structuring the Investigation

If further investigation is required, the Headteacher appoints a qualified Investigating Officer (IO), often with input from safeguarding or legal experts. Key elements of the investigation plan include:

1. **Defining Objectives**
Establishing the investigation's scope, key questions, and potential outcomes in alignment with AWS's safeguarding and legal obligations.
2. **Assigning Resources**
Identifying the personnel, tools, or external agencies required for a thorough and impartial investigation.
3. **Setting a Timeline**
Establishing a realistic timeline for completion, with expedited processes for safeguarding-related concerns.

Conducting the Formal Investigation

The formal investigation involves gathering evidence, interviewing relevant parties, and analysing documentation. Steps include:

1. **Evidence Collection**
The IO gathers documentation such as emails, meeting notes, and any other relevant records, ensuring all evidence is securely stored and managed under GDPR.
2. **Interviews**
Relevant parties, including witnesses, are interviewed. All participants are informed of their rights, including confidentiality and support options, such as union representation.
3. **Collaboration with Experts**
The IO consults with safeguarding, legal, or HR professionals as necessary to ensure the investigation is comprehensive and compliant with regulatory standards.

For complex or sensitive cases, AWS may involve external investigators or safeguarding experts to ensure objectivity and thoroughness.

Documentation and Record-Keeping

AWS ensures meticulous record-keeping throughout the investigation:

1. **Investigation Logs**
The IO maintains a detailed log documenting all actions, findings, and decisions.
2. **Secure Storage**
Records are stored securely and are only accessible to authorised personnel to ensure confidentiality.
3. **Regulatory Compliance**
Where necessary, investigation records may be shared with external bodies, such as Ofsted or the LADO, in line with safeguarding regulations.

Corrective Action and Disciplinary Measures

Findings from the investigation inform appropriate corrective actions, which may include:

1. **Policy and Procedural Changes**
Addressing systemic issues by revising policies, procedures, or training programmes.
2. **Staff Retraining**
Mandating additional training for staff involved in policy breaches to prevent recurrence.
3. **Disciplinary Actions**
Implementing disciplinary measures, including warnings, suspension, or dismissal, where misconduct is substantiated.
4. **Law Enforcement Involvement**
Reporting criminal conduct to the police, with AWS supporting law enforcement investigations as needed.

Reporting to External Bodies and Follow-Up

Significant issues, particularly safeguarding concerns, may require AWS to notify external authorities:

1. **Reporting to the LADO or Ofsted**

Ensuring regulatory compliance and accountability for safeguarding-related concerns.

2. **Informing Parents or Guardians**

Where appropriate, AWS may notify parents or guardians about issues affecting student safety, while maintaining confidentiality for other parties.

Whistle-Blower Follow-Up and Feedback Mechanisms

To support a culture of openness, AWS prioritises follow-up with whistle-blowers:

1. **Providing Outcome Summaries**

Whistle-blowers are informed of investigation outcomes in general terms, respecting data protection laws.

2. **Encouraging Feedback**

Feedback from whistle-blowers is sought to refine AWS's policies and procedures.

3. **Offering External Support**

Whistle-blowers are reminded of external resources, such as the NSPCC or Protect, for further advice or assistance.

7. Support, Training, and Resources

Adventure Wellbeing School (AWS) recognises that the effectiveness of its Whistle-Blowing Policy depends not only on robust procedures but also on comprehensive support, accessible resources, and continuous staff training. These initiatives aim to create a supportive environment where staff feel confident to report concerns.

Annual Training Sessions

AWS conducts mandatory annual training sessions for all staff, which include:

1. **Understanding the Whistle-Blowing Policy**

- Key objectives, procedures, and protections offered to whistle-blowers.

2. **Safeguarding Training**

- Specific focus on identifying safeguarding risks, particularly for SEND and SEMH students, and reporting them appropriately.

3. **Practical Guidance**

- Step-by-step instructions on how to raise concerns, maintain confidentiality, and handle sensitive issues.

These sessions ensure staff are well-informed and empowered to recognise and act on potential risks or misconduct.

Ongoing Support Systems

AWS provides emotional and professional support to whistle-blowers and those involved in investigations:

1. **Access to Leadership**

- Staff can seek guidance or clarification from the Headteacher or members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) about whistle-blowing procedures.

2. **Union Representation**

- Staff are encouraged to consult union representatives for additional support during the reporting or investigation process.

3. **Counselling Services**

- For those experiencing stress or anxiety due to whistle-blowing, AWS offers access to confidential counselling services.

External Resources

AWS makes external resources readily available to staff, ensuring they have access to independent advice and support when needed:

1. Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work)

- An independent organisation providing confidential advice on whistle-blowing, including legal protections under PIDA.
- Contact: [Insert appropriate contact details].

2. NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline

- A dedicated helpline for concerns related to child welfare and safeguarding.
- Contact: 0800 028 0285.

Information Accessibility

To ensure all staff are aware of available support, AWS:

1. Distributes Policy Documents

- The Whistle-Blowing Policy is included in onboarding materials for new staff and regularly updated copies are distributed to existing staff.

2. Creates Visible Resources

- Posters and guidance documents are displayed in common areas, highlighting key contacts and whistle-blowing steps.

Continuous Improvement

AWS seeks feedback from staff and external bodies to improve training and resources:

1. Feedback Mechanisms

- Anonymous surveys or suggestion boxes allow staff to share insights about the effectiveness of training and resources.

2. Policy Reviews

- Feedback is incorporated into annual policy reviews to ensure training and support systems remain relevant and effective.

By integrating these support systems, training initiatives, and external resources, AWS fosters a culture where staff feel secure and supported in raising concerns. This proactive approach enhances AWS's commitment to safeguarding, transparency, and ethical standards.

8. Policy Review and Monitoring

Adventure Wellbeing School (AWS) is committed to maintaining an effective Whistle-Blowing Policy through regular review and monitoring. These efforts ensure the policy remains aligned with legal requirements, safeguarding best practices, and feedback from the school community.

Annual Reviews

The Proprietary Body conducts annual reviews of the Whistle-Blowing Policy to:

1. Ensure Compliance

- Verify alignment with current legislation, such as the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA), Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), and safeguarding guidelines.

2. Incorporate Feedback

- Evaluate input from staff, whistle-blowers, and external stakeholders to identify areas for improvement.

3. Address Emerging Challenges

- Adapt the policy to respond to new risks, safeguarding challenges, or changes in the educational environment.

Communication of Updates

Any amendments to the policy are promptly communicated to all staff. Updates are accompanied by revised training sessions to ensure the changes are clearly understood and implemented.

Continuous Improvement

AWS actively encourages staff to provide feedback on the Whistle-Blowing Policy through surveys, suggestion boxes, and direct communication with leadership. Insights from whistle-blowing cases are used to:

1. **Refine Procedures**
 - Improve reporting processes, investigation protocols, and support systems.
2. **Enhance Training**
 - Address gaps in staff knowledge or confidence through targeted training sessions.

Through these monitoring and review practices, AWS ensures the Whistle-Blowing Policy remains a valuable tool in safeguarding students, fostering transparency, and upholding ethical standards.

9. Appendices

Appendix A: Key Contacts

- **NSPPC Whistleblowing Advice Line:** 0800 028 0285
- **Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work):** 020 3117 2520

Appendix B: List of Prescribed Bodies

1. **Ofsted:** For concerns related to educational standards or child welfare.
2. **Department for Education (DfE):** For regulatory or compliance issues.
3. **Local Safeguarding Authorities:** For safeguarding concerns affecting students.

Appendix C: Whistle-Blowing Form

- **Employee Name:** _____
- **Date:** _____
- **Summary of Concern:** _____