



Policy No: 24a(1)

## OUR LADY'S ABINGDON (OLA) WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

*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.*

### Document Details

Information Sharing Category	Public Domain
Date Published	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2022
Authorised by (if required)	The Governing Board
Review/Update Date	September 2023
Responsible Area	Head and Leadership Team

We comply with the Government guidance and regulations, currently in force, regarding COVID.

This policy applies to all activities undertaken by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours and away from the school site.


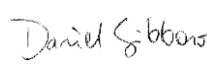

**Availability:** All who work, volunteer or supply services to our school have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this policy and its procedures both within and outside of normal school hours, including activities away from school.

### Monitoring and Review:

Reviewed: September 2022

Next Review: September 2023

Signed:

Chief Operating Officer (COO)	Head	Chair of Governors
Mr Prav Karian	Mr Daniel Gibbons	Freddy El Turk
Signed: 	Signed: 	Signed: 

*Please also refer to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Online Safety Policy*

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

'Whistleblowing' means the reporting by employees of suspected misconduct, illegal acts or failure to act within OLA. We are committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability and we encourage staff and others working with us who have any concerns about any aspect of our work, especially in relation to safeguarding pupils, to come forward and voice those concerns. In some instances, concerns may need to be expressed on a confidential basis. Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of the Leadership Team. This procedure encourages staff to raise serious concerns, without fear of reprisal or victimisation, internally within school rather than overlooking a problem or raising the matter outside.

It applies to all staff, agency workers and supply staff and those contractors working on the premises, for example, cleaners, builders, volunteers and drivers. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract in their own premises. It enables staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour or unethical conduct.

*OLA is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.*

*Whistleblowing Policy: Reviewed September 2022*

It is recognised that whistle blowing may engender feelings of disloyalty to colleagues or that staff may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however natural, must never result in the behaviour that is causing concern continuing. The main principle which this policy encourages is that it is important for an individual not to worry if they are wrong, but rather the consequences if they are right and do not report a concern.

### **Other Complaints Procedures**

This policy is separate from OLA's complaints procedure and procedures relating to discipline, grievance, capability and other statutory reporting procedures. Child Protection issues should be reported according to the specific guidelines laid out in the Safeguarding Policy. The whistle blowing policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of any other existing procedures. This policy is in line with the fact that OLA:

- does not tolerate malpractice
- Respects the confidentiality of staff raising concerns and will try to maintain confidentiality as far as is practicable
- provides an opportunity to raise concerns outside of the normal line management structure, if needed
- will apply the disciplinary procedure in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations
- provides a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all members of staff.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice under this procedure will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect an individual.

### **Behaviour that should cause concern:-**

- Conduct which is, has been or is likely to be an offence or breach of law.
- Conduct that has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur, the result of which means that the School fails to comply with a legal obligation. For example, unauthorised use of public funds, fraud and corruption, bribery, dishonesty, verbal, sexual or physical abuse, or other unethical conduct, discrimination of any kind and waste/frivolous expenditure.
- Disclosures related to past, current or likely miscarriages of justice.
- Past, current or likely health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees.
- Past, current or likely damage to the environment.

### **Reasons for whistle blowing**

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risks to others.
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself.

### **What stops people from whistle blowing**

- Starting a chain of events which spirals.
- Disrupting the work or project.
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers.
- Fear of not being believed.

### **How to raise a whistleblowing concern**

- Concerns can be raised verbally, by e-mail or by letter to the Head or the Chief Operating Officer (COO). The communication should outline the background and history, giving names, dates and places where you can. Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why. A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.
- If your concern is about your immediate line manager, approach the Head. If your concern is about the Head, or you feel you need to take it to someone outside the school, contact the Chair of Governors [chair@ola.org.uk](mailto:chair@ola.org.uk)
- The Head and/or COO will arrange a meeting with you to discuss your concern. Additional meetings may be  
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necessary once any investigation is underway.

**Please remember that if you have a concern about a member of staff behaving in an inappropriate way towards a pupil, you should go directly to the Head who will refer to the LADO if there is a potential allegation of abuse. If the Head is not available or the concern is about the Head, then you should contact the Chair of Governors directly (contact details within this policy and available from the school office or Chief Operating Officer). If you cannot contact the Chair of Governors, you should contact the Oxfordshire LADO yourself. See the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for more information.**

#### **How the school will respond**

- Any concern raised will be subject to a thorough investigation which will begin within a 24 hour time period
- Wherever possible, you will be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.
- OLA has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation as far as is reasonably possible.
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a serious disciplinary offence.
- This policy is intended to provide employees and other persons with an avenue to raise concerns within OLA. The School hopes that this will be sufficient. However, if it is felt necessary to take the matter outside the School, then advice will be sought from a relevant professional body.

#### **Confidentiality**

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if this is your wish. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if you are required to come forward as a witness.

#### **Anonymous Allegations**

Whenever possible you should put your name to your allegation as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those that are attributed to a named individual. However, anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at the school's discretion. In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

#### **Self-reporting**

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with the Line Manager or Head so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

#### **Further advice, support and contact details**

It is recognised that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support are available from the Head.

**Chair of Governors:** Mr Freddy El Turk (*contact available by letter marked 'private' and deposited with the school for posting, or by his direct email: [chair@ola.org.uk](mailto:chair@ola.org.uk)*)

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