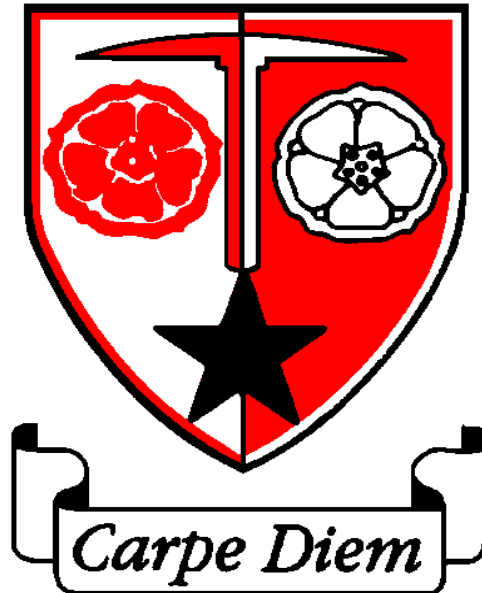


Audenshaw School



CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY

This policy is reviewed every two years by the Resource Committee.

History of Document

Issue No	Author/Owner	Date Written	Approved by Resource	Received by Governors	Comments
1.5	Jeanette Saw	05/03/18	16/03/18	16/03/18	Minor Amendments
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1.9	Deborah Patel	23/08/23	11/10/23	11/10/23	Minor amendments

OUR MISSION

Our school aims to provide a quality education in a caring community based on values of respect, responsibility and resilience and a relentless pursuit of excellence in all that we do.

OUR VISION

Our School will be recognised as a fully inclusive, aspirational, high achieving centre of excellence, firmly rooted in the local community.

We will create, develop and maintain a challenging and stimulating personalised learning environment where no student is overlooked or left behind and where teaching and learning is high quality, inspirational and innovative.

We will consistently have high academic standards and expectations for every individual and continue to place considerable value on sport and healthy living and developing strong links with the community.

All members of our school community will be valued and every success will be celebrated.

Our School will maintain a safe, secure and caring environment in which to work and learn.

AUDENSHAW SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

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

CONTENTS

		Page Numbers
1.	Introduction	4
2.	Aims of This Policy	4
3.	Scope of This Policy	5
4.	Designated Officer	6
5.	Safeguards Against Harassment or Victimisation	6
6.	Confidentiality	7
7.	Anonymous Allegations	7
8.	Untrue Allegations	7
9.	Unfounded Allegations	7
10.	Support to Employees	8
11.	How to Raise A Concern	8
12.	School's Initial Response	9
13.	The Investigation	10
14.	How the Matter Can be Taken Further	11
Appendix 1	Confidential Reporting Form	12
Appendix 2	Confidential Reporting Flowchart	13

1. INTRODUCTION

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the School. However, they may not want to express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the School. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

Audenshaw School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the School's work, to come forward and voice those concerns. This includes issues whereby a person suspects discrimination is occurring. It also relates to the way in which other employees and students are treated, particularly if there are concerns about employees taking advantage of the vulnerability of students.

This Policy makes it clear that all employees can voice concerns in the knowledge that any victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage that they may be subject to will be fully investigated and dealt with in accordance with the School's policies and procedures. This Confidential Reporting Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the School rather than overlooking a problem or taking the concern outside of the organisation.

The Policy applies to all employees and those contractors working for the School on the premises, for example, agency staff and contractors.

These procedures are in addition to the School's complaints or grievance procedures.

2. AIMS OF THIS POLICY

This Policy aims to:

- encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice;
- provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied;
- reassure you that you will be protected by the School from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in good faith.

This Policy:

- is written and made available to every employee of Audenshaw School
- states to whom and what it applies
- provides for matters to be dealt with quickly

- states that the School is committed to tackling issues of malpractice
- ensures that employees know that malpractice will be dealt with seriously
- states who will deal with allegations and how they will be dealt with
- reminds employees that they can seek the help of their trade union or professional body
- aims to ensure the confidentiality of any allegations and actions taken, as far as is reasonably practicable
- ensures that allegations and responses to them are properly recorded
- the Policy of Conduct for Local Government Employees states that

“Employees will be expected through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service. Employees must report to the appropriate manager any impropriety, breach of procedures, or unprofessional conduct by any member of staff”.

The School and this Policy support that statement.

3. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. The Confidential Reporting Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures, and this Policy does not replace the School’s Complaints Policy.

Thus, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of employees or others acting on behalf of the School can be reported under the Confidential Reporting Policy. An employee’s concerns may in this context relate to the following matters, or a reasonable belief that one or more of the following has occurred or is likely to occur:

- actions or behaviour that makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the School subscribes to; or
- is against the School’s Funding Agreement; or
- falls below established standards of practice; or
- amounts to improper conduct; or
- conduct which is a criminal offence or a breach of the law; or
- disclosures related to miscarriages of justice; or
- dangerous procedures risking health and safety, including risks to the public, service users and to other employees; or
- damage to the environment; or

- gross mismanagement of funds
- the unauthorised use of public funds; or
- fraud and corruption; or
- serious misuse or abuse of authority
- sexual or physical abuse of others, particularly students; or
- other unethical conduct.

This list is not meant to be exhaustive but gives examples of malpractice.

The overriding concern for the employer and employee should be that it would be in the public interest for the malpractice to be corrected and if appropriate sanctions taken.

Thus, any serious concern that an employee has about any aspect of School provision or the conduct of employees or others acting on behalf of the School can be reported under this Policy.

4. DESIGNATED OFFICER

The Board of Governors has appointed a Designated Officer (**Mr Phillip Murphy, Vice Principal**) to be the point of contact for concerns raised under the Confidential Reporting Policy. The Designated Officer is a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The Designated Officer will remain impartial and take an independent view on the concern raised.

The Designated Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this procedure.

The Designated Officer will maintain a record of concerns raised, copy of records associated with the investigations and the outcomes (in a way that does not endanger confidentiality), and shall report where necessary to the Board of Governors

5. SAFEGUARDS AGAINST HARRASSMENT OR VICTIMISATION

- Audenshaw School is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees.
- Audenshaw School recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, or your suspicion reasonable, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you are providing a service.
- Audenshaw School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.
- Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect you.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness.

You should ensure that you only inform the person identified in Section 4. Other than that you are required to keep the matter disclosed confidential.

The Designated Officer will treat it confidentially, as far as is reasonably practicable.

It is stated explicitly here that if the procedure used requires disclosure to other people, then this will be discussed with you before your name is disclosed.

If the matter cannot be resolved locally by the person to whom it is reported, it may be necessary to inform other people of the concern raised. These people should only be those required to know under whatever procedure the matter progresses.

If a hearing is needed, either by law, or under an agreed school procedure, you may be required to give evidence.

It is not possible to remain anonymous under this procedure, but the safeguards stated here are aimed at protecting all those involved in reporting, investigating and being suspected of wrongdoing.

7. ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

This Policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.

Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the Designated Officer.

In exercising this 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.

8. UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

9. UNFOUNDED ALLEGATIONS

Following investigation, allegations may be confirmed as unfounded. This outcome will be notified to you and you will be informed that the Board of Governors, as represented by the Designated Officer, deems the matter to be concluded and that it should not be raised again unless new evidence becomes available.

10. SUPPORT TO EMPLOYEES

It is recognised that raising concerns can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support will be made available, as appropriate, to both you and the employee(s) subject to the investigation.

11. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

Step 1 – Identify to whom you are going to talk to

- You should normally raise a concern with the Designated Officer.
- If the Designated Officer is involved you should raise the concern with the Principal.
- If the Principal is involved the Designated Officer should raise the concern with the Chair of Governors.
- If the Chair of Governors is involved the Designated Officer should raise the concern with the Secretary of State.

The Designated Officer (**Phillip Murphy**) can be contacted by email at: Murphyp@audenshawschool.org.uk or on extension number 128.

The Principal (**Peter Taylor**) can be contacted by email at: taylorpj@audenshawschool.org.uk or on extension number 120.

The Chair of Governors (**Terry Hall**) can be contacted by email at: terence.hall6@btinternet.com or via telephone on 07796234404.

For the remainder of this Policy it is assumed that the Designated Officer will deal with your concern; however, where the Designated Officer is involved, you should substitute this role with that of Principal, or the appropriate person referred to above based on who the concern relates to

Step 2 – Confirmation of Concern

- Concerns should be confirmed in writing setting out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason for the concern. The Confidential Reporting Form (see Appendix 1) can be used for this purpose.
- If you do not initially feel able to put your concern in writing you should telephone or meet with the Designated Officer.

It is important that, however the concern is raised you make it clear that you are raising the issue via the Confidential Reporting Policy.

The earlier a concern is raised, the easier it is to take action.

Although you are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the Designated Officer that there are sufficient grounds for the concern.

12. SCHOOL'S INITIAL RESPONSE

The Designated Officer will arrange an initial meeting to establish that:

- there is genuine cause and sufficient grounds for the concern; and
- the concern has been appropriately raised via the Confidential Reporting Policy.

The Designated Officer will ask you to put your concern in writing, if you have not already done so. The Designated Officer will make notes of the discussion that they had with you. Both your written concern and the Designated Officer's notes should make it clear that you are raising the issue via the Confidential Reporting Policy and provide:

- the background and history of the concern;
- names, dates and places (where possible);
- the reasons why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

You will be asked to sign and date your written concern and the notes of your discussion with the Designated Officer. You will be positively encouraged to do this, as a concern expressed anonymously is much less powerful and much more difficult to address, especially if the written concern and/or notes become evidence in other proceedings e.g. disciplinary hearing.

The designated officer may determine that it is more appropriate for your concern to be dealt with under a different procedure or in a different way. If this is the case, you will be advised and provided with details of how to take your concern forward. This will only be after careful consideration of all the facts provided.

If it is felt appropriate for your concern to be raised under this procedure the Designated Officer will explain to you:

- what steps they will take to address the concern;
- how they will communicate with you during and at the end of the process;
- that a written response will be sent out to you within **ten working days** (see section 13);
- that your identity will be protected as far as possible, but should the investigation into the concern require you to be named as the source of the information, that this will be discussed with you before your name is disclosed (see section 6);
- that the Board of Governors will do all that it can to protect you from discrimination and/or victimisation (see section 5);
- that the matter will be taken seriously and investigated immediately;
- that if your concern, though raised in good faith, is not confirmed by the investigation, no punitive action will be taken against you;
- if clear evidence is uncovered during the investigation that you have made a malicious or vexatious allegation, disciplinary action may be taken against you;

- the investigation may confirm your allegations to be unfounded in which case the Board of Governors will deem the matter to be concluded and you will not be expected to raise the concern again, unless new evidence becomes available.

13. THE INVESTIGATION

Following the initial meeting with you, the Designated Officer will consult with the Principal (or Chair of Governors or Secretary of State as appropriate) to determine whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle which the School will have in mind is the public interest. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted. A record will be made of all decisions and agreed actions.

It may be necessary, with anonymous allegations, to consider whether it is possible to take any further action. When making this decision, the following factors will be taken into account:

- the seriousness of the issue(s) raised;
- the credibility of the concern(s);
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation(s) from attributable sources.

In some cases, it may be possible to resolve the concern(s) simply, by agreed action or an explanation regarding the concern(s), without the need for further investigation. However, depending on the nature of the concern(s) it may be necessary for the concern(s) to be:

- investigated by management
- investigated by external auditors
- progressed through the disciplinary process to Governors
- referred to the Police
- the subject of an independent enquiry
- dealt with via any other appropriate procedure for example, child protection, procedure.

Within **ten working days** of a concern being raised, the Designated Officer will write to you:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how the School proposes to deal with the matter
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made
- supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms, and
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not

- providing you with details of who to contact should you be dissatisfied with the response.

The amount of contact between you and the Designated Officer considering the issues will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the School will seek further information from you.

Where any meeting is arranged, off-site if you so wish, you can be accompanied by a trade union representative or a colleague.

The School will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the School will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

Upon completion of the investigation, the Designated Officer will submit their findings and recommendations to the Principal (or Chair of Governors) in writing. The School accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, you will be informed of the outcome of any investigation within 5 working days of the outcome being made to the Principal (or Chair of Governors).

14. HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

This Policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the School to raise concerns. The School hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside the School, the following are possible contact points:

- Protect – Speak Up Stop Harm. Protect – Advice.org.uk
telephone number 020 3117 2520.
Protect – Speak Up Stop Harm is a registered charity that employees can contact for advice to assist them in raising concerns about poor practice at work. The charity also provides advice to employers as to the possible ways to address these concerns.
- your trade union
- your local Citizens' Advice Bureau
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- the police
- a solicitor

If you do take the matter outside the School, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information and you are advised to first check with the Designated Officer.



CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING FORM

Form CR1

WHAT CONCERN(S) DO YOU WISH TO RAISE?

In your own words describe your concern(s), include date(s), person(s) involved, including any witnesses, location, the length of time you have been concerned.

WHY ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT THE ISSUE(S)?

HAVE YOU DISCUSSED THE ISSUE(S) WITH ANYONE ELSE? YES / NO

If so, who with _____ When (date) _____

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME OF THIS PREVIOUS DISCUSSION?

Name: _____ Signed: _____ Date: _____

ON COMPLETION, THIS FORM SHOULD BE SENT TO THE DESIGNATED OFFICER (**PHILLIP MURPHY**) IN A SEALED ENVELOPED MARKED PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING FLOWCHART

