Richard Lander School

Confidential Reporting Procedure ("Whistleblowing") Policy

Policy Effective from: September 2026

Responsibility: Governing Body

Reviewed by: Governing Body

Review Date: September 2027

Introduction

The Governing Body of Richard Lander School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns.

This procedure makes it clear that Staff can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. It is intended to encourage and enable Staff to raise serious problems within the school rather than overlooking a problem or "blowing the whistle" outside. Part IVA of the Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended by the 2013 Act, provides protection for workers who disclose information which might otherwise be regarded as confidential.

The procedure has been discussed with the relevant trade unions and professional organisations and has their support.

Aims and Scope of this Procedure

This procedure aims to:

- encourage staff to feel confident in raising serious concerns about practice
- provide avenues for Staff to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- ensure that staff receive a response to concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied
- reassure staff that they will be protected from possible victimisation if they have a reasonable belief that they have made any disclosure in good faith.

The procedure is intended to supplement, rather than to replace, the existing complaints, disciplinary and grievance procedures as laid down in the HR Handbook. It is intended to cover serious concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures and may relate to something which:

- is against Financial Regulations, Contract Procedure Rules, and any other part of the Council's policies and procedures which the school has adopted
- is against the school's policies and procedures, or
- falls below established standards of practice, or
- amounts to improper conduct, including, but not limited to something Staff believe may be:
    - against the law
    - a Health and Safety risk
    - suspected fraud, bribery or corruption
    - damaging to the environment
    - misuse of public money
    - corruption or unethical conduct

The school's safeguarding policy is the primary policy for reporting safeguarding concerns about the safety of children and young people. If a complaint is raised via this policy, cases will be responded to and dealt with using a separate procedure.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort, within legal parameters, will be made to protect Staff identity. At the appropriate time, however, Staff may need to provide a statement or act as a witness and will be expected to co-operate fully with the investigation
and disclose all relevant information.

Anonymous Allegations

This procedure encourages Staff to put their name to their concern as anonymous allegations may often be difficult to substantiate/prove.

Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be investigated unless the School's Monitoring Governor (Chair of Governors) decides there is insufficient evidence to proceed.

Untrue Allegations

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

How to Raise a Concern

As a first step staff should normally raise concerns with their Head of Department / line manager and inform him/her they are using this procedure. However, Governors recognise that on occasion this may not be appropriate.

Heads of Department / line managers should report more serious issues which are disclosed to them, to the Headteacher.

A number of alternative contacts may be appropriate depending on the nature of the concern. For example:

- staff could approach a more senior manager in the school such as the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher(Jenny Griffiths) Should the matter involve the Headteacher, then staff should inform the Chair of Governors; Yvette Butterfield; yvette.butterfield@richardlander.cornwall.sch.uk;
- Telephone the HR helpdesk: 01872 323500 (Option 5) or email hrhelpdesk@cornwall.gov.uk
- Telephone the Chief Audit Executive Tel: 01872 323988
- Contact any other senior manager of the Council
- Alternatively, you can raise a concern in writing to The Monitoring Officer (marking the letter Private and Confidential), New County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro, TR1 3AY or by emailing whistleblowing@cornwall.gov.uk. This should identify the nature of the concerns and the grounds upon which these are based. Information on the background, history, names, date and places should be provided if possible.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing.

Although staff are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of their concerns, they will need to demonstrate that they have reasonable grounds to raise them.

Where employees fail to report their concerns they may become themselves implicated and consequently Governors may treat failure by an employee to report such matters as a serious matter which could lead to disciplinary action.

Staff may wish to obtain assistance in putting forward their concern from HR helpdesk, a Trade Union representative or a colleague. They may choose to be represented by a Trade Union representative or colleague at any meetings which are required.

How the Governing Body will respond

In order to protect individuals and Governors, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. It is advisable that they seek the advice of the Local Authority Employee Relations team before making this decision. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example safeguarding issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

The person with whom staff have raised their concern will inform the Monitoring Governor (Chair of Governors) of the facts. The relevant Governor will write to the member of staff, within ten working days with the following:

- acknowledgement that the concern has been received
- an indication of how the concern will be dealt with
- an estimate of how long it will take to provide a full response
- whether any initial enquiries have been made
- whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.

The Governor will inform the member of staff in writing of the outcome of any investigation, or any action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law.

The Responsible Officer

The School's Monitoring Governor has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy within the school. That Governor will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes and will report as necessary to the Governing body. The recording and reporting procedure will be in a form which ensures Staff confidentiality.

How the Matter can be Taken Further

This procedure is intended to provide staff with a route within the school to raise concerns but if staff do not feel their concern has been addressed adequately they may raise it with an independent body such as one of the following:

- Trade Union – if you are a member of a trade union
- Ofsted tel no. 0300 123 1231 or www.ofsted.gov.uk
- Local Citizens Advice Bureau
- Police (in an emergency 999 or for non-urgent matters 101)
- Your Member of Parliament

Staff have a duty to the school not to disclose confidential information. This does not prevent staff from raising concerns with an independent body referred to above, or Public Concern at Work (telephone number 020 7404 6609). More information is available at https://protect-advice.org.uk/ a registered charity which advises on serious malpractice within the workplace in accordance with the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.