



Aston Rowant C+E Primary School

Whistleblowing Policy

Mission Statement

Vision: To be a community of courageous life-long learners, who are rooted in God, live out our Christian values and enjoy life in all its fullness. (Col 2:1-7)

Mission: Growing together, rooted in God and inspiring one another through our values and our broad enriched curriculum.

Strapline: Growing together, rooted in God, having fullness of life (Col 2:1-7)

Date of Policy: October 2025

Date of Policy review: October 2027

Head Teacher: Mrs H. France

Date: September 2025

Chair of Governors: Mr T. Sowerby

Date: September 2025

KEY OBJECTIVE

All schools must have robust procedures for whistleblowing so staff can raise concerns safely, confidently and without fear. This policy explains:

- what constitutes whistleblowing;
- how concerns can be raised and escalated;
- how whistle-blowers are protected in law;
- how investigations will be conducted.

This procedure applies to all employees, agency workers, supply staff, contractors and volunteers.

To meet Ofsted and ESAT expectations, the school additionally commits to:

- fostering a culture of safeguarding, openness and accountability;
- ensuring staff know exactly how to report concerns internally and externally;
- providing safe routes of escalation, including bypassing internal leadership if necessary;
- maintaining clear governance oversight of whistleblowing.

The Whistleblowing Governor is **Mr Tom Sowerby**.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Aston Rowant CofE Primary School upholds the highest standards of:

- openness and inclusiveness;
- accountability;
- integrity;
- justice, truth and transparency, consistent with our Christian values.

We commit to:

- ensuring all staff feel safe to raise concerns;
- responding proportionately, promptly and fairly;
- maintaining confidentiality appropriately;
- ensuring concerns contribute to a stronger safeguarding culture.

3. SCHOOL AIMS

- To encourage staff to raise concerns promptly.
- To ensure concerns are taken seriously, investigated properly and acted upon.
- To protect whistleblowers from detriment.
- To provide clear, accessible guidance on reporting routes.
- To ensure concerns relating to safeguarding are escalated immediately to the DSL.

WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of wrongdoing or risks that are in the public interest, such as:

- criminal offences;
- failure to comply with legal obligations;
- miscarriages of justice;
- health and safety risks;
- safeguarding failures or abuse of pupils;
- financial irregularity or misuse of funds;
- corruption or unethical conduct;
- deliberate concealment of wrongdoing.

Concerns may relate to past, current or future actions.

Concerns about personal employment issues should normally follow the Grievance Procedure, unless the concern is genuinely in the public interest.

LEGAL PROTECTION FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

Whistleblowers are legally protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Staff must have a reasonable belief that their concern:

- is raised in the public interest, and
- involves potential wrongdoing.

The governing body will:

- protect whistleblowers from detriment;
- keep disclosures as confidential as possible;
- ensure fair treatment for both whistleblowers and staff named in allegations.

SAFEGUARDING CONTEXT

Key to supporting our Whistleblowing Policy is ensuring we:

- identify concerns early;
- maintain a safe culture;
- ensure adults act decisively when worried about a child or colleague;
- ensure leaders cannot suppress or ignore concerns;
- protect children from harm.

Where a whistleblowing concern relates to:

- failure to follow safeguarding procedures,
- concerns about staff conduct,
- unsafe practice,
- poor safeguarding culture,

...staff must report it immediately to the DSL or directly to the Headteacher. If the concern is about the Headteacher, it must be reported to the Chair of Governors.

RAISING A WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing.

Staff may report concerns to:

- their line manager;
- the Headteacher;
- the Whistleblowing Governor;
- the Chair of Governors.

If a concern relates to safeguarding or if staff feel unable to raise it internally, they may contact:

- Director of Children, Education and Families (Oxfordshire CC);
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- any external body listed in Annex 1 and 2.

Reporting to the media removes whistleblowing protections in most circumstances.

Staff may seek advice from their trade union, Citizens Advice or Protect (Public Concern at Work).

Anonymous concerns will be considered, although the ability to investigate may be limited.

HOW THE SCHOOL WILL RESPOND

Within **10 working days**, the person receiving the concern will confirm:

- how the concern will be handled;
- expected timescales;
- whether more information is needed;
- whether an investigation will take place;
- what support is available.

Investigations may involve:

- internal fact-finding by SLT;
- an internal audit;
- referral to the LA or LADO;
- referral to the police;
- an independent external investigation.

Full details may not always be shared in order to maintain confidentiality or comply with the law.

OUTCOMES

The whistleblower will be informed in writing of the conclusion of the investigation where appropriate.

If they feel the concern has not been addressed properly, they may escalate to:

- their union;
- Citizens Advice;
- the relevant professional regulator;
- the Local Government Ombudsman;
- the Police.

Staff may also disclose exceptionally serious issues to other recognised bodies where legally permitted.

MONITORING & OVERSIGHT

To meet inspection expectations, the school maintains robust oversight of whistleblowing.

Leadership Oversight

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors:

- monitor whistleblowing logs termly;
- review outcomes and actions taken;
- ensure timely follow-up and proportionality;
- report patterns to the Governing Body Safeguarding Committee.

Safeguarding Oversight

The DSL ensures:

- whistleblowing concerns relating to safeguarding are escalated same-day;
- staff are trained annually on reporting routes;
- culture and procedures are continuously reviewed.

Governance Oversight

Governors must:

- ensure whistleblowing routes are safe and trusted;
- ensure staff feel confident to report concerns;
- verify that leaders act on concerns and do not suppress them.

REVIEW OF THE PROCEDURE

As we are a VA school the Governing Body has responsibility for this policy.

The procedure will be reviewed biennially to ensure compliance with:

- safeguarding legislation;
- whistleblowing law;
- Ofsted expectations;
- ESAT audit requirements.

Confidential monitoring will be used to ensure fairness and equality.

OUR SCHOOL VALUES

Gratitude • Resilience • Outreach • Wonder • Truth • Harmony

These values underpin this policy and guide how concerns are raised, responded to and resolved.