



Homebrook Woods

Independent Special School

Ages 5–11 | Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), Speech, Language and
Communication Needs (SLCN) and Associated SEND

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
Employment Rights Act 1996
Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026

Document Control

Policy Title	Whistleblowing Policy
Provision	Homebrook Woods
Policy Owner	Proprietor / Headteacher
Approved by	Proprietor
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Next Review	August 2027

Related Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
 - Staff Code of Conduct
 - Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy
 - Complaints Policy
 - Grievance Policy (where applicable)
 - Disciplinary Policy (where applicable)
 - Safer Recruitment Policy
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1. Introduction

Homebrook Woods is committed to maintaining the highest standards of honesty, integrity, openness and accountability in all aspects of its work.

Staff, volunteers and others working on behalf of Homebrook Woods are often the first to become aware of concerns about poor practice, misconduct or wrongdoing. The school encourages all individuals to raise genuine concerns promptly so that they can be investigated appropriately and addressed before they become more serious.

No member of staff should ever feel unable to speak up about concerns that may affect the safety of children, colleagues, visitors or the integrity of Homebrook Woods.

This policy provides a clear process for reporting concerns in the public interest and explains how those concerns will be managed fairly, confidentially and without fear of retaliation.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- encourage a culture of openness and transparency;
 - enable concerns to be raised at the earliest opportunity;
 - provide a clear reporting procedure;
 - protect individuals who make genuine disclosures in the public interest;
 - ensure concerns are investigated appropriately;
 - promote accountability and continuous improvement;
 - support the safeguarding and welfare of children.
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3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- employees;
- volunteers;
- governors and advisory board members;
- agency staff;
- contractors;
- consultants;

- students on placement;
- anyone working on behalf of Homebrook Woods.

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and may be amended where necessary to reflect changes in legislation or guidance.

4. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998;
 - Employment Rights Act 1996;
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026;
 - Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended);
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023);
 - Equality Act 2010.
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5. Our Commitment

Homebrook Woods is committed to ensuring that anyone raising a genuine concern:

- is listened to;
- is treated fairly;
- is protected from victimisation;
- is not disadvantaged because they have spoken up;
- receives an appropriate response.

The school recognises that speaking up can feel difficult.

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns without fear of reprisal and in the knowledge that Homebrook Woods values honesty, professionalism and safeguarding above reputation.

6. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which, in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure, is in the public interest and tends to show that wrongdoing has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.

Examples include concerns relating to:

- criminal offences;
- fraud;
- financial malpractice;
- safeguarding failures;
- abuse or neglect;
- health and safety risks;
- unlawful discrimination;
- breaches of statutory guidance;
- environmental damage;
- deliberate concealment of wrongdoing;
- serious breaches of school policies;
- unsafe professional practice.

7. What is NOT Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is different from a personal grievance.

Issues relating solely to:

- pay;
- workload;
- interpersonal disagreements;
- performance management;
- terms and conditions of employment;

should normally be raised through the school's Grievance Procedure.

Where there is uncertainty, staff are encouraged to seek advice before deciding which procedure is appropriate.

8. Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Where a concern relates to the safety or welfare of a child, staff must not delay action by considering whether the concern falls within this policy.

Concerns about a child must be reported immediately in accordance with the **Homebrook Woods Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**.

Normally this will be to the:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

or, where appropriate:

- Deputy DSL (if appointed)

If the concern relates to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, it should be reported directly to the Proprietor.

If the concern relates to the Proprietor, staff should contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or another appropriate safeguarding authority in accordance with statutory guidance.

Staff should always act in accordance with **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026**.

9. Raising a Concern

Concerns should normally be raised with the Headteacher.

Where this is not appropriate, concerns may be raised with:

- the Proprietor;
- the Chair of the Advisory Board (where appointed).

Concerns should ideally be made in writing and include:

- the nature of the concern;
- relevant dates;
- names of individuals involved;
- any supporting evidence;
- details of any witnesses;
- any action already taken.

However, concerns may also be raised verbally if this is more appropriate.

Individuals may be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague at meetings held under this procedure.

10. Confidentiality

Homebrook Woods will make every reasonable effort to protect the identity of an individual raising a concern.

Information will only be shared with those who need to know in order to investigate and respond appropriately.

Anonymous disclosures will be considered, although they may be more difficult to investigate effectively.

Individuals are encouraged to identify themselves wherever possible to enable appropriate support and communication throughout the investigation.

11. Investigation of Concerns

All whistleblowing concerns will be taken seriously and considered promptly.

On receipt of a concern, the recipient will normally:

- acknowledge receipt where appropriate;
- arrange to meet with the individual raising the concern;
- establish the nature and scope of the concern;
- determine whether the matter falls under this policy;
- consider whether immediate safeguarding action is required;
- assess whether further investigation is necessary.

Where appropriate, investigations may be undertaken by:

- the Headteacher;
- the Proprietor;
- an independent investigator;
- an external adviser;
- another appropriate professional.

Investigations will be conducted fairly, objectively and without unnecessary delay.

The person raising the concern will normally be kept informed of progress, although confidentiality or legal considerations may limit the amount of information that can be shared.

12. Outcomes

Following investigation, Homebrook Woods may conclude that:

- no further action is required;
- additional enquiries are necessary;
- school procedures require improvement;
- further staff training is required;
- disciplinary action should be considered;
- safeguarding referrals are required;
- criminal activity should be reported to the Police;
- another external agency should be notified.

Where appropriate, lessons learned from investigations will be used to improve practice and reduce future risk.

13. Protection for Whistleblowers

Homebrook Woods recognises that raising concerns can be difficult.

No individual who raises a genuine concern in good faith will suffer:

- victimisation;
- harassment;
- discrimination;
- unfair treatment;
- dismissal;
- any other detriment because they have spoken up.

This protection applies even where an investigation concludes that no wrongdoing has occurred, provided the concern was raised honestly and in the reasonable belief that it was in the public interest.

Any attempt to victimise or retaliate against a whistleblower may be treated as misconduct and managed through the school's disciplinary procedures.

14. Malicious or Knowingly False Allegations

Homebrook Woods encourages staff to raise concerns whenever they genuinely believe wrongdoing may have occurred.

However, where it is found that an allegation has been made:

- maliciously;
- deliberately;
- knowing it to be false; or
- for personal gain,

the matter may be managed under the school's disciplinary procedures.

The school recognises the important distinction between a malicious allegation and a genuine concern that is ultimately not substantiated.

No action will be taken against an individual simply because an investigation does not uphold their concern.

15. External Disclosures

Homebrook Woods encourages concerns to be raised internally wherever possible so that they can be investigated and addressed promptly.

However, individuals may choose to raise concerns externally where appropriate.

Depending upon the nature of the concern, this may include:

- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- Ofsted;
- the Department for Education;
- the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO);
- the Health and Safety Executive (HSE);
- the Police;
- Children's Social Care;
- another prescribed regulatory body.

Independent confidential advice may also be obtained from:

Protect (Independent Whistleblowing Charity)

Telephone: **020 3117 2520**

Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk>

Email: **whistle@protect-advice.org.uk**

Staff are encouraged to seek advice before making an external disclosure where appropriate.

16. Record Keeping

Appropriate records will be maintained of:

- concerns raised;
- investigations undertaken;
- decisions reached;
- actions taken;
- lessons learned.

Records will be stored securely and confidentially in accordance with the Homebrook Woods Data Protection Policy and Data Retention Schedule.

Access will be restricted to those who have a legitimate need to know.

17. Monitoring and Review

The Proprietor will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- review of concerns raised;
- investigation outcomes;
- safeguarding audits;
- staff feedback;
- policy reviews;
- changes in legislation and statutory guidance.

The school is committed to maintaining a culture in which staff feel confident to raise concerns and where openness, honesty and accountability are actively encouraged.

18. Equality and Fairness

Homebrook Woods is committed to ensuring that this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.

No individual will be disadvantaged because of:

- age;
- disability;
- sex;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage or civil partnership;
- pregnancy or maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sexual orientation; or
- any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

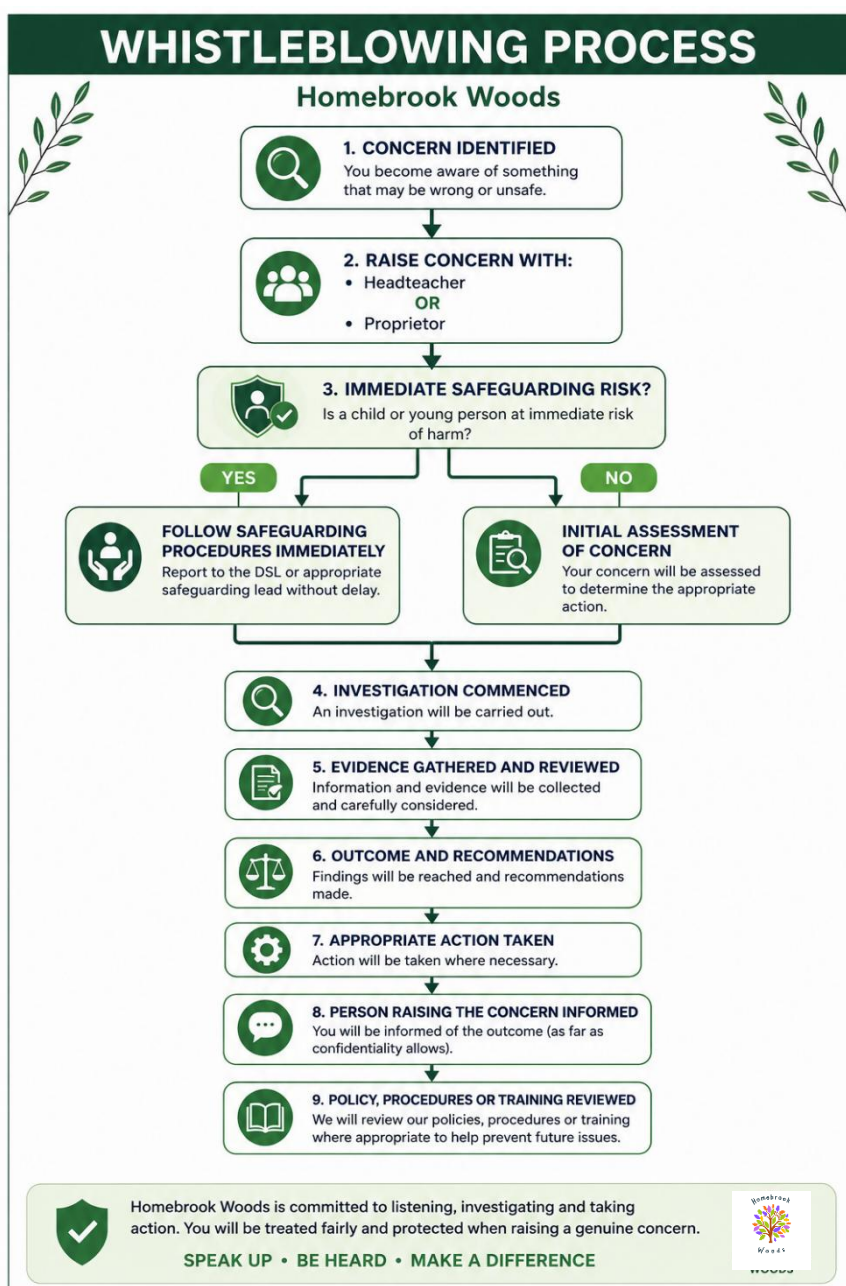
Reasonable adjustments will be made where necessary to ensure all individuals can access this procedure.

19. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- annually;
 - following changes to legislation;
 - following updates to statutory guidance, including **Keeping Children Safe in Education**;
 - following significant incidents;
 - where improvements to practice are identified.
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20. Whistleblowing Process



21. Linked Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Grievance Policy (where applicable)
- Disciplinary Policy (where applicable)
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Data Protection Policy