



Whistleblowing Policy

International Montessori School of Albania



Approved by:	Mirlinda Boshnjaku	Date: September 2025
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Definition

In the context of our school, whistleblowing refers to reporting activities deemed illegal, unethical, or not in line with the school's policies and practices. This includes but is not limited to actions that compromise student safety, misuse of school funds, abuse of authority, and violations of laws or regulations.

Whistleblowing is distinct from general concerns or grievances typically relating to personal employment conditions or interpersonal conflicts. Whistleblowing is a mechanism for staff, volunteers, and contractors to report serious concerns that **extend beyond individual issues** – meaning it impacts others and has implications for the welfare and integrity of the school and its community. **On the other hand a grievance is a complaint that generally** relates to an individual's own employment position or personal circumstances at work.

This policy does not set out the procedure which applies to grievances. **If you have a concern or complaint about your own personal circumstances only, then you should use the separate Raising a Concern (Grievance) procedure.**

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors, paid and unpaid, working in the school, including governors. Training on whistleblowing is provided as part of the Safeguarding and child protection training regularly provided by the school. This may be in an email or during a staff meeting or training session.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with:

Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)

Working Together to Safeguard Children (December 2023)

The school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (including 'Prevent' where it applies)

The School is committed to delivering services of the highest possible standard, having a culture of safety and of raising concerns where staff are valued and reflective practice is promoted. Therefore, we welcome and encourage you (and others) to come forward and voice any concerns that you have about any aspect of the School's work, including about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's safeguarding regime, so that they can be dealt with effectively. We want you to feel able to raise concerns within the School without fear of reprisals rather than overlooking a problem. The school promotes a culture of transparency and accountability in relation to how concerns are raised and handled, so you should feel supported in coming forward.

Employees must acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of Senior Leadership and/or Orbital Education. Although this can be difficult, it is particularly important when the welfare of children is at risk.

As an employee, you may be the first to realise that something may be wrong within the school. However, you may not feel able to express your concerns because you feel that speaking up would be disloyal to your colleagues or the School. You may also fear harassment

or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may be easier for you to ignore the concern rather than report it. These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember, it is often the most vulnerable child or young person who is targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare:

Don't think what if I'm wrong - think what if I'm right.

Reasons for Whistleblowing

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practices or behaviour
- To prevent the problem from worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself
- What stops people from whistleblowing
- 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

What concerns should you raise?

Concerns that fall within the scope of the whistleblowing policy may be about something that:

- is unlawful; or
- is against the School's policies; or
- falls below established standards or practice; or
- amounts to improper conduct.

AND affects other individuals beyond yourself.

Remember: As a School employee, you have the right to raise concerns, which could be about the actions of other employees or private contractors. Under the School's Health and Safety Policy, you are expected to raise concerns about potential health and safety risks.

If you are concerned about your own terms and conditions of employment, or an individual concern which affects you only, you should raise this with the HoS and/ or the Regional Head of School under the School's Raising a Concern (Grievance) Procedure as detailed above.

Self-Reporting

Any person employed by the school must report immediately to the HoS any convictions they receive.

There may be occasions when an employee has a personal difficulty, maybe a physical or mental problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

Please note: before blowing the whistle, you should consider the following:

- the responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practices or behaviour rests with all employees;
- you should use staff meetings and other opportunities to raise questions and seek clarification on issues that concern you;
- While it can be difficult to raise concerns about a colleague's practice or behaviour, you must act to prevent the problem from getting worse, to reduce potential risks to the health and safety of others, and to prevent yourself from potentially being implicated.

How should you raise a concern?

The earlier a concern is expressed, the easier and sooner it is possible to take action. As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your:

- immediate line manager; OR
- the HoS for more serious worries.

However, if you believe that management is involved, you should contact:

- the Regional Head of School, Karl Wilkison at karl@orbital.education

Ideally, you should put your concerns in writing, stating clearly:

- that you are raising concerns via the whistleblowing policy;
- the background and history of the concerns;
- names, dates and places where possible;
- the reasons why you are particularly concerned about the situation; AND

- your name and post title. (Concerns provided anonymously are much less powerful, are not likely to be as effective and will be considered only at the School's discretion).
- If you cannot put your concern in writing, you can telephone or meet the appropriate person from the list above. Although you will not be expected to prove the truth of any allegation, you must demonstrate to the person you contact that there are sufficient grounds for your concern.

Remember: the earlier you express a concern, the easier and sooner it is possible for the School to take action.

We recognise that, in some circumstances, you may wish to discuss concerns relating to the kinds of wrongdoing covered by this policy on an informal basis in the first instance. If you choose to raise concerns informally, you acknowledge that we may not follow a formal procedure in accordance with this policy – but that a line manager or Principal may investigate your concerns to clarify and/or resolve the issue.

However, if you remain dissatisfied and wish for the full procedure to be followed, you should clearly state this in writing for avoidance of any doubt.

What happens next?

Once you have raised a concern, the School will:

- Give you information on the nature and progress of any enquiries;
- Take action to protect you from harassment or victimisation;
- Provide mediation and resolution if appropriate
- Do its best to protect your identity if you do not want your name disclosed (although this might not be possible in all cases, especially if a signed statement is needed from you in order to address the concern via another procedure, e.g. the disciplinary procedure); and
- Take no action against you if you raise a concern, in good faith, that is later confirmed to be unfounded.

The HoS will make initial enquiries (usually involving a meeting with you) to decide whether an investigation is required and what form it should take. For example, the matter raised may:

- Be resolved simply without the need for further investigation;
- Be investigated internally by an appropriate manager, e.g. the Line Manager;
- Be referred to Orbital Education for advice;
- Be referred to the Police;

- Form the subject of an independent inquiry.

Concerns or allegations that raise issues covered by other School policies/procedures will normally be addressed under those procedures, e.g. disciplinary, health and safety, grievance, child protection and adult abuse procedures.

Within ten working days of your concern being received, the person receiving the concern will send you a written response:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- Indicating how he/she proposes to deal with the matter;
- Provide an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response and/or
- Indicating whether any initial enquiries have been made and whether further investigations will take place or
- Explain the reasons for not investigating further if that is the decision and/or indicate when you can expect to receive further details if the situation is not yet resolved.

Remember: if your concern, once investigated, is confirmed as unfounded, the School will deem the matter to be concluded and will not expect you to raise the matter via another procedure or with the person on the list given above unless new evidence becomes available.

Please note that if there is clear evidence that you have deliberately made a malicious or false statement, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

If you are not happy with the response that you receive from the School, you may wish to raise the matter with:

- Mr Karl Wilkinson, Orbital Regional Head of School, via the email above.
- Or external agency and/or a Solicitor

Remember: if you raise a concern externally, it is your responsibility to ensure that confidential information is not disclosed, i.e. you must not hand over confidential information, in whatever format, to a third party.

Further advice and support

It is recognised that whistleblowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support are available from the Principal. You can also seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead at school. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Ms. Fjorda Shijaku.

Policy Review

This Whistleblowing Policy will be reviewed and updated biannually to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. Amendments will be made to address any identified gaps, legal requirement changes, or policy user suggestions. The updated policy will be communicated to

all school community members to ensure awareness and understanding. This regular review and update process demonstrates our commitment to maintaining a robust and responsive whistleblowing framework.

This policy was updated/revised July 2025.

Next review date: September 2027

Reviewed: 2025

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