COLMERS SCHOOL
& SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Whistleblowing Policy

2026–27

Relevant legislation and guidance	Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998; Employment Rights Act 1996; Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013; current statutory safeguarding guidance
Linked policies	Staff Code of Conduct; Grievance Procedure; Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; Allegations Against Staff Procedure
Review frequency	Annual
Policy owner	Headteacher
Approved by	Governing Body
Date approved	September 2026
Next review date	September 2027

1. Purpose

Colmers School and Sixth Form College is committed to openness, integrity and accountability. This policy enables a person working in or for the school to raise a serious concern in the public interest, without fear of retaliation, so that it can be considered promptly and fairly.

2. Scope

The procedure applies to employees, workers, agency workers, contractors working personally for the school and trainees. Volunteers and governors are encouraged to use it, although statutory whistleblowing protection may not apply to them in the same way. It does not form part of any contract of employment.

A personal complaint about an individual's own employment will normally be considered under the grievance procedure. A concern about a child at immediate risk must be reported without delay under safeguarding procedures. The school will identify the appropriate route from the substance of the concern, not merely its label.

3. What is whistleblowing

A protected disclosure is information which the person reasonably believes tends to show relevant wrongdoing and is made in the public interest. Relevant wrongdoing includes:

- a criminal offence
- failure to comply with a legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- danger to health and safety
- damage to the environment
- deliberate concealment of any of these matters

Examples may include safeguarding failures, fraud, corruption, serious misuse of public funds, deliberate breach of legal duties or concealment of unsafe practice. A person need not prove the allegation before reporting it, but should explain the facts and reasons for concern.

4. Raising a concern

1. Raise the concern as soon as practicable with the Headteacher, verbally or in writing.
2. If the concern involves the Headteacher, or reporting to the Headteacher would be inappropriate, contact the Chair of Governors.
3. If both routes are compromised, contact the Vice-Chair, the local authority's designated whistleblowing contact or another appropriate prescribed person.

A written report should set out the background, relevant dates, people involved, supporting information and any immediate risk. A person may be accompanied at a meeting by a trade union representative or workplace colleague. Reasonable adjustments will be made where required.

5. Response and investigation

The recipient will acknowledge the concern, assess immediate safety and safeguarding needs, decide who should investigate and identify conflicts of interest. The investigator will be impartial and suitably skilled. The matter may be referred to safeguarding partners, the LADO, police, auditors, regulators or another body where necessary.

The person raising the concern will be told, so far as law and confidentiality allow, how the school proposes to deal with it and when further contact can be expected. They will not normally receive confidential personal details or disciplinary outcomes concerning another person.

6. Confidential and anonymous reports

The school will protect the identity of a person raising a concern as far as reasonably possible. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where disclosure is required by law, needed to safeguard a child

or necessary for a fair investigation. Anonymous concerns will be considered according to their seriousness, credibility and the evidence available, although anonymity may restrict enquiries and feedback.

7. Protection from detriment

No worker will suffer dismissal, disciplinary action, disadvantage, threats or other detriment for making a protected disclosure. Retaliation, victimisation, interference with reporting or pressure to withdraw a concern may itself lead to disciplinary action. Anyone who believes they have suffered detriment should inform the Headteacher or Chair promptly and may seek independent advice.

8. External disclosures and advice

The purpose of this policy is to provide a safe internal route, but the law may protect a disclosure to an appropriate prescribed person or body where the statutory conditions are met. A person may seek confidential advice from their trade union, a legal adviser, Protect, or the NSPCC whistleblowing advice line for concerns about child protection. Wider disclosure, including to the media, has stricter legal conditions; independent advice should be obtained.

9. If the person remains concerned

A person who reasonably believes the concern has not been addressed should write to the Chair of Governors, or to the Vice-Chair where the Chair handled the matter, explaining the outstanding issue. The reviewer will consider whether the process was reasonable, whether relevant evidence was overlooked and whether further action is required. This review does not prevent a lawful disclosure to an appropriate external body.

10. False information

No action will be taken merely because a concern is not substantiated. Knowingly making a false allegation or acting maliciously may be dealt with under the relevant conduct procedure.

11. Records and monitoring

The school will keep secure, proportionate records of concerns, decisions and actions in accordance with data-protection and records-management requirements. The Governing Body will receive anonymised information about themes and the effectiveness of the arrangements where this can be provided without compromising confidentiality or an investigation.

12. Review

The Governing Body will review this policy annually and sooner following a relevant legal change, serious incident or evidence that the procedure is not operating effectively.