

<b>Paradis International College</b>	<b>Doc. Ref.:</b>
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<b>WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY</b>	

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## **1. Introduction**

Paradis International College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, students and visitors to share this commitment.

All outcomes generated by this document must take account of and contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at the School.

This policy enables members of staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion about fraud, corruption, serious malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriage of justice, and failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour or unethical conduct.

Paradis International College is committed to the highest possible standards of openness and accountability. In line with that commitment, we encourage employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of the School's work to come forward and voice those concerns. Paradis International College acknowledges that raising a concern about a colleague is challenging for staff but ask that staff remember that their colleague could be struggling to cope and alerting senior staff will enable us to put any necessary support and guidance in place.

## **2. Audience**

This policy statement applies to all permanent and temporary employees, agents and contractors. It is intended to complement statutory protection and local policies and, for the avoidance of doubt, statutory rights will not be affected in any way by this policy. For the purposes of this policy, the reporting employee is also referred to as "whistleblower" and the reported person or persons as "person(s) concerned".

## **3. Aims of the Policy**

In its pursuit of excellence, Paradis International College is committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability, and takes all malpractice very seriously, whether it is committed by an employee, supplier, client, competitor or contractor. Paradis International College believes that a culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do.

The policy on whistleblowing is intended to demonstrate that Paradis International College;

- Has a culture of safety for raising concerns, valuing staff and reflective practice.
  - Will not tolerate malpractice.
  - Respects the confidentiality of employees raising concerns and will provide procedures to maintain confidentiality so far as is consistent with progressing the issues effectively
  - Will provide the opportunity to raise concerns outside of the standard line management structure where this is appropriate.
  - Will invoke the School's disciplinary policy and procedure in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations.
  - Will provide a clear and straightforward procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all employees
- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoings as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected wherever possible.
- To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns; and
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

## **4. Purpose**

4.1 Employees will usually be the first to know when someone inside or connected with Paradis International College is doing something illegal, dishonest or improper, but may feel apprehensive about voicing their concerns. Paradis International College does not believe that it is in anyone's interests for employees with knowledge of wrongdoing to remain silent.

4.2 We wish to encourage a working environment where employees feel comfortable about highlighting malpractice. If you have reasonable concerns or suspicions that malpractice is taking place or is likely to take place within our work place, we would encourage you to raise this in accordance with the local processes in plan and/or policy below. We believe everyone should feel able to disclose concerns and 'speak up' (whistleblow) safe in the knowledge that the issue will be investigated, with no adverse impact on themselves. This whistleblowing procedure has been set up to give everyone this comfort if you believe that there has been or continues to be a serious malpractice or wrongdoing, which the company should be aware of.

4.3 All Paradis International College employees may, in adequately carrying out their duties, have access to, or come into contact with, information of a confidential nature.

Contractual terms and conditions provide that, except in the proper performance of duties, employees are forbidden from disclosing, or making use of, in any form whatsoever, such confidential information.

4.4 Paradis International College does, however, adopt this policy on disclosing the public interest, i.e. whistleblowing, to enable members of staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, and failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour or unethical conduct. The policy also provides, if necessary, for such concerns to be raised outside the organisation.

4.5 This procedure is separate from the School's adopted policies regarding grievances. Employees should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise grievances about their personal employment situation. This procedure is to enable employees to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the School, and potential failures in the School's safeguarding regime, these concerns should be in the public's interest.

4.6 People working within organisations are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong in the place in which they work. They may be wary of expressing concerns because they feel that to do so would be disloyal to their colleagues or to their School. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may feel more comfortable to ignore the concern rather than report what may be a suspicion of malpractice.

4.7 Malpractice is not easily defined; however, it includes allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to the staff code of ethics, criminal activities, or failing to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice, or creating or ignoring a severe risk to health, safety or the environment.

4.8 Employees who wish to raise a concern under this procedure are entitled to have the matter treated confidentially, and their name will not be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator of malpractice without their prior approval. It may be appropriate to preserve confidentiality that concerns are raised orally rather than in writing. However, employees are encouraged to express their concern in writing wherever possible. If there is evidence of criminal activity, the Police will be informed.

4.9 Victimisation or harassment of anyone using this policy or if anyone tries to discourage others from coming forward will be deemed to be a disciplinary matter.

## **5. How to Raise a Concern**

- 5.1 If you become aware of any such activities or other possible malpractices and do not feel that you can raise this to your line manager or through the normal routes or believe that due to serious nature of the issue it is not appropriate, you are encouraged to follow the process set out below which is called Whistleblowing. It will not always be clear that a particular action falls within one of these categories and so you will need to use your own judgement. However, if you believe the matter to be serious, Paradis International College would prefer you to report your concerns by speaking up rather than keep them to yourself.
- 5.2 In raising a concern through this process, Paradis International College does not expect you to have absolute proof of any malpractice that you report, however, you will need to be able to explain the reasons for your concern and you must have reasonable grounds on which to base any allegation related to the types of examples listed as serious malpractice above. Paradis International College will not tolerate spurious, abusive, vexatious or malicious allegations and disciplinary action may be taken against you, under relevant disciplinary processes.
- 5.3 Employees will be at liberty to express their concerns to their line manager. If this is not appropriate, then they should contact the Executive Head or Head of HR. Should the allegation be of a safeguarding nature, this concern should be raised directly with the Executive Headmaster, each School's Headteacher or the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- 5.4 Concerns must be raised in writing. If the employee wishes to make a written report, the School recommends that they include in their letter, the background and history (giving relevant dates) and provide the reason why they are particularly concerned about the matter.
- 5.5 If the employee has a concern about any financial loss or irregularity you should raise this directly with the Director of Finance.
- 5.6 This procedure is separate from Paradis International College procedures regarding grievances; please see the Paradis International College policies and guidance for advice on how to raise a grievance within practices. Employees should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise grievances about their employment situation;

instead, this procedure is to enable staff to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within Paradis International College.

## **6. How the School will handle the concern**

Please note that this Whistleblowing process is not a replacement for any grievance, appeal, safeguarding or any local policies or processes. Any grievance about you personally should be raised under a grievance procedure in the first instance and please speak to your line manager or contact your local HR department for further information about this. The following process should only be followed if you have reasonable grounds of serious malpractice of wrongdoing.

### **6.1. Step One – Raising a Concern (Whistleblowing)**

The first step in most instances should always be to follow any local policies and procedures that may exist with regards to raising a concern or safeguarding issue. Typically, in the first instance, you should raise your complaint with your Line Manager, who will then raise the matter, confidentially, with the Head of Department or relevant Director, who will request a meeting with you in order to ascertain the key facts of the complaint.

### **6.2 Step Two – Recording of the details**

The date of your report;

Your name, work location/school and your line manager;

details of the suspected malpractice, including: dates, times, people, places and location.

### **6.3 Step Three – Investigating the details**

If you have raised your concern to your Head of Department or relevant director, this will trigger a number of steps to ascertain the details directly with yourself in line with the current processes.

In all cases, Paradis International College will endeavour to acknowledge receipt of your concern within 5 working days.

Preliminary enquiries will be made by an independent senior manager as confidentially as possible. If it is determined that a fuller investigation is necessary, this will proceed either with further internal investigations or by referral to the appropriate external body dependent upon the nature and seriousness of the report.

The investigation process may include interviews with you and with anyone who might be involved in the suspected malpractice. Our aim is to ensure that any investigation is as proportionate and independent as possible, whilst always maintaining confidentiality and anonymity where possible.

#### **6.4 Step Four – Taking Action**

A high level summary record of any incident registered through Whistleblowing will be held by the Executive Headmaster and Head of HR. Possible results of the investigation process may include:

- No further action
- Disciplinary action (under the Paradis International College Disciplinary Policies)
- Further investigation by an external authority only where appropriate

Subject to any legal and confidentiality constraints, Paradis International College will communicate the findings of the investigation to:

- The person raising the report or issue;
- The individual(s) under investigation (if appropriate); and
- If appropriate, those members of the Group's management or external authorities who need to consider whether action should be taken on the basis of the findings.

Cases relating to suspected criminal activity, including but not limited to fraud, would be reviewed by the Executive Headmaster, the Director of Finance and the Head of HR to decide whether they should be referred to the Police or other relevant authority. If you are unhappy about the outcome of an investigation, you have the option to make a further report which will be investigated but only if there is good reason to do so or there is new evidence and not for any inappropriate reason listed in section 4.

Any concerns raised will be investigated thoroughly and promptly, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. The employee making the allegation will be kept informed of progress wherever possible and, subject to third party rights, will be notified of the outcome.

An employee who is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with will have a right to raise it in confidence with the Executive Headmaster and Head of HR. If urgent action is required, this may be taken before any investigation is conducted.

## **7. Raising a Concern Externally – Media**

Even when extreme circumstances are thought to exist, it will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to approach a commercial body or the media with details of the suspected wrongdoing. If you approach any such body and/or where your concern is disclosure for personal gain, the School will consider this to be Gross Misconduct and immediate disciplinary action may be taken against you. This action should be discussed with the Head of School, or member of the Board before it is given any serious consideration.

## **8. Confidentiality**

This policy encourages everyone directly or indirectly employed By Paradis International College to put their name to any disclosure they make to avoid anonymous disclosures where serious malpractice is suspected. It is recommended that all issues raised through this process are done openly because Concerns expressed anonymously are sometimes less easy for Paradis International College to investigate thoroughly.

Paradis International College will guarantee the protection of your identity at all times. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the reported person(s) has the right to know about any Whistleblowing issue raised, but your identity as a reporting employee won't be disclosed to the reported person under any circumstance unless you have expressly consented or such disclosure is required by law. This duty also applies to any information from which the identity of the reporting person can be deduced.

The records will be kept confidential and Inspired will guarantee the prohibition of retaliation against the reporting employee in any form, including threats or attempts of retaliation.

In addition to providing protection to reporting employees, Paradis International College will also implement measures for the protection of 'persons concerned' who are referred to in a report or public disclosure as persons to whom the breach can be attributed. These persons will have guaranteed the right to an effective remedy, a fair trial, the presumption of innocence, and the rights of defence, including the right to be heard and the right to access the file. The same protection of the identity of reporting persons must also be extended to the protection of the identity of 'persons concerned.'

The reports related to personal data will be shared only with those who need to have access to the data for purposes of investigating the allegations or for taking follow-up measures under the appropriate confidentiality and security safeguards.



If there is evidence of criminal activity, then the Police will in all cases, be informed.

## **9. Right of Information and Right of Access**

Your right of information of any investigation and any action taken in relation to your concern as well as the possible recipients of the report will be guaranteed at all times.

You can also exercise your right to access and rectify incorrect, incomplete, or outdated personal data, or to have your data erased.

Your rights may be only limited to ensure the protection of the rights and freedoms of others affected by the reporting as well as when its processing is required to comply with a legal obligation. Persons concerned should have the right to object to the processing of their personal data in the context of a report, but with the limitation of Paradis International College's or a third party's legitimate interest.

## **10. Protecting Against Victimisation**

If any person raises a malpractice concern, this will be taken seriously and such person(s) will be treated fairly and with discretion. All staff have a responsibility to ensure that their colleagues are not subjected to detrimental treatment as a result of disclosing malpractice. Where an individual has disclosed malpractice and is then penalised in some way for doing so, both we, as the employer, and the person taking any detrimental action, can be liable. This means that if any individual penalises a colleague who has disclosed malpractice, the individual may be personally liable to their colleague and may have to pay compensation personally.

## **11. Complaints**

If you are unhappy with the outcome of an investigation, you should submit another report explaining why this is the case. Your concern will be investigated again if there is a good reason to do so.

## **12. Untrue Allegations**

False, malicious, vexatious or frivolous accusations will be treated as gross misconduct and dealt with under the Schools' Disciplinary and Competency Procedures.

If an employee makes an allegation in good faith, but the evidence produced during the investigation does not substantiate it, no action will be taken against them. If, however, an employee makes an allegation maliciously or for personal gain, this may result in disciplinary action being taken against them.

No employee will suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern, providing that they do so in good faith and follow the Whistle-blower procedures.

## **13. Relevant Data**

We will not process more personal information than necessary. Inspired will only collect the relevant information to the particular case, so it will carry out an initial check of the information reported and only the relevant data will be kept.

## **14. Keeping records**

Records will be kept for no longer than it is necessary and proportionate to comply with the requirements imposed by the Whistleblowing Policy. Inspired will take all reasonable technical and organisational measures to preserve the security of personal data that are part of the Whistleblowing report. These records will be protected from accidental or unlawful destruction or accidental loss and unauthorised disclosure or access.

## **15. Sharing of Data**

Personal data is shared only with those who need to have access to the data for purposes of investigating the allegations or for taking follow-up measures. Anyone receiving such data should ensure that it is handled confidentially and subject to data security safeguards.

## **16. Status of this policy**

This policy is not part of any contract of employment and does not create contractual rights or obligations. It may be amended by Inspired at any time.

If you require guidance or support with the details of this policy or compliance with it, or are unsure on any part of the policy, please contact the Executive Headmaster and/or the Head of HR.

