Whistleblowing Policy

**Aim:**

To ensure staff know how to raise genuine concerns of suspected bribery, breaches of the law, and serious wrongdoings.

Inclusive Academy Dance School encourage staff to raise genuine concerns at the earliest, practicable stage. This policy is intended to safeguard members of staff who wish to raise concerns about malpractice with the dance school.

This policy also aims to encourage staff to raise genuine concerns through internal procedures without fear of adverse repercussions being taken against them. The law allows staff to raise concerns externally and this policy informs staff how they can do so. However, a failure to raise a concern under this procedure may result in a disclosure losing its protected status under the law.

This policy applies for all workers, including volunteers.

**Protected disclosures:**

The law protects staff who, out of sense of public duty, want to reveal suspected wrongdoing or malpractice.

The law allows staff to raise what it defines as a ‘protected disclosure’. In order to be a protected disclosure, a disclosure must relate to a specific subject matter, and it must be made in an appropriate way. A protected disclosure must be in the reasonable belief of the worker making it and also be in the public interest.

A protected disclosure must consist of information and not just be allegations of suspected malpractice.

**Specific subject matters:**

If, in the course of employment, a member of staff becomes aware of information which they reasonably believe shows one or more of the following, they must use this policy and procedure.

* A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed, or is likely to be committed.
* An individual has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which they are subject.
* A miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur.
* The health and safety of any individual has been, is being, or is likely to be endangered.
* The environment has been, is being, or is likely to be damaged.
* If information tending to show any of the above is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

**Procedure for making a disclosure:**

Information which a member of staff reasonably believes shows one or more of the above, should promptly be disclosed to the principal (Ellie) so that appropriate action can be taken.

The staff making the disclosure are encouraged to identify themselves when making the disclosure. If an anonymous disclosure is made, the dance school will not be able to notify the individual making the disclosure of the outcome of action taken by the dance school. Anonymity also means that the dance school will have difficulty in investigating such as a concern.

Inclusive Academy Dance School reserve the right to determine whether to apply this procedure in respect of an anonymised disclosure in light of the following:

* The seriousness of the issue raised,
* The credibility of the concern,
* How likely it is that the concern can be confirmed from attributable sources.

**Procedures for investigation of a disclosure:**

When a member of staff makes a disclosure, the principle (Ellie) will acknowledge its receipt in writing within a reasonable time.

Inclusive Academy Dance School will then determine whether it believes the disclosure is wholly without substance or merit. If we consider the disclosure does not have sufficient merit or warrant further action, the member of staff who made the disclosure will be notified in writing of the reasons for the decision and advised that no further action will be taken by Inclusive Academy Dance School under this policy.

Considerations to be considered when making this determination may include the following:

* If we are satisfied that the worker does not have reasonable belief that suspected malpractice is occurring,
* If the matter is already subject of legal proceedings or appropriate action by an external body,
* If the matter is already subject to another appropriate procedure.

When a member of staff makes a disclosure, which has sufficient substance or merit warranting further action, we will take action it deems appropriate (including action under any other applicable Inclusive Academy Dance School policy or procedure). Possible action could include internal investigation or referral to relevant external bodies such as the police or the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO).

The member of staff making the disclosure will be notified of the outcome of any action taken by us under this policy within a reasonable period of time. If the member of staff is not satisfied that their concern has been appropriately addressed, they can appeal against the outcome within 10 working days. However, timescales should be flexible, taking into account that different types of concerns will require varying time for investigation.

All communications with the member of staff making the disclosure should be in writing and sent to the member of staff’s home address. If investigation into the concern are prolonged, we should keep the member of staff concerned updated as to the progress of the investigation and an estimated timeframe for its conclusion.

**Safeguards for workers making a disclosure:**

A member of staff making a disclosure under this procedure can expect their matter to be treated confidentially by us and, where applicable, their name will not be disclosed to anyone implicated in the suspected wrongdoing without their prior approval. For confidentiality purposes, if the member of staff requests to raise their concern verbally, it would be appropriate for us to allow the member of staff to do so.

Inclusive Academy Dance School will take all reasonable steps to ensure that any report of recommendations, or other relevant documentation, produced by us does not identify the member of staff making the disclosure without their written consent or unless we are legally obliged to or for the purposes of seeking legal advice.

No formal disciplinary action will take place against the member of staff on the grounds of making a disclosure made under this policy or procedure. This does not prevent us from bringing disciplinary action against a member of staff where we have grounds to believe the disclosure was made maliciously or where the disclosure is made outside of Inclusive Academy Dance School without reasonable grounds.

A member of staff will not suffer dismissal or any detrimental action or omission of any type by us for making a disclosure in accordance with this policy or procedure. Equally, where a member of staff is threatened, bullied, pressurised, or victimised by a colleague for making a disclosure, disciplinary action will be taken by us against the colleague in question.

**Disclosure to external bodies:**

The policy has been implemented to allow members of staff to raise disclosures internally. A member of staff has the right to make a disclosure outside of Inclusive Academy Dance School where there are reasonable grounds to do so and in accordance with the law.

Members of staff may make a disclosure to an appropriate external body prescribed by the law. Members of staff can also make disclosures on a confidential basis to a practicing solicitor or barrister.

If a worker seeks advice outside of Inclusive Academy Dance School, they must be careful not to breach any confidentiality obligations or damage our deputation in so doing.

**Accountability:**

Inclusive Academy Dance School will keep record of all concerns raised under this policy and procedure (including cases where we deemed that there is no case to answer and therefore not action should be taken).

**Further assistance for members of staff:**

Inclusive Academy Dance School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of members of staff who make disclosures. If, at any stage of this procedure, a member of staff feels that they are being subject to informal pressures, bullying, or harassment due to making a disclosure, they should raise this matter, in writing, to the principal (Ellie).

For further advice, members of staff can contact Protect for confidential advice on whistleblowing issues or use the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline.

**Protect:**

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

Phone: 020 3117 2520

Address: The Green House
 244-254 Cambridge Heath Road
 London E2 9DA

Or complete the form on this page - <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/>

**NSPCC whistleblowing helpline**

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/>

Signed: E.Andrews