

Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

Contact names	
Executive Principal and Kensington Principal Hampstead Principal Westminster Principal	Siobhan McGrath Shirley Harwood Justine Oliver
Designated Safeguarding Leads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kensington • Hampstead • Westminster Portland Place • Westminster Conway Street 	Jon Coward Stuart Bain Salah Hajjaj Amal Hirani
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kensington • Hampstead • Westminster Portland Place • Westminster Conway Street 	Emma Netherton Jason Horth Laken Randhawa Ana De Castro
Designated Safeguarding Lead for Early Childhood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kensington • Hampstead 	Paris Innes Ute Gebhart
Cognita Director of Education	Simon Camby Cognita, 5 & 7 Diamond Court, Opal Drive, Eastlake Park, Fox Milne, Milton Keynes, MK15 0DU Telephone: 01908 396 250
Independent Chairs of Safeguarding Governance Committee (SGC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kensington • Hampstead • Westminster 	Lisa Laws Lisa Laws Lisa Laws
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Third Party contacts	
Public Concern at Work Charity	020 7404 6609 24 hour confidential line www.pcaw.org.uk
Ofsted's Whistleblower Hotline	0300 123 3155

Key Facts

- Staff are encouraged to report to Cognita any suspected wrongdoing within their School or within Cognita.
- Members of staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy will be supported, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern.
- Staff should ordinarily report wrongdoing internally. In most cases staff should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.
- Reports made maliciously or in bad faith may lead to disciplinary action.
- For reporting allegations of abuse or any child protection concern please refer to procedures for Managing Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy.

1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1. Cognita encourages open communication. This Policy applies to all individuals working for Cognita including all individuals working within a Cognita school. It applies to individuals working at all levels whether full-time, part-time or temporary. Reporting suspected wrongdoing is often called 'whistleblowing'. If you make such a protected disclosure you are protected in law from detrimental treatment.
- 1.2 The aims of this Policy are:
- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately, and that their confidentiality will be respected;
 - To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise their 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.
- 1.3 This Policy does not form part of any contract of employment and may be amended or updated at any time.
- 1.4 You should use this Policy when you suspect wrongdoing within the School/Company. Some examples of wrongdoing include:
- 1.4.1 Actions which endanger the Health and Safety of others or the environment
 - 1.4.2 Bribery or corruption
 - 1.4.3 Criminal activity
 - 1.4.4 Fraud or other financial irregularities
 - 1.4.5 Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements
 - 1.4.6 Conduct which suggests extremism or radicalisation of other staff or students
 - 1.4.7 Conduct likely to damage the Company's reputation
 - 1.4.8 Sexual, physical or emotional abuse of members of staff or pupils (but please see the Code of Conduct and Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy)

- 1.4.9 Misuse of sensitive information
- 1.4.10 Deliberate attempts to conceal any of the above.

1.5 Whistleblowing is not about complaints relating to your personal circumstances (for these refer to the Cognita Employment Handbook and other policies such as the Grievances Procedure, Anti-workplace Bullying Policy and Anti-harassment Policy).

2. Your protection

2.1 If you have raised a genuine concern through this Policy, the School/Company will ensure you suffer no detriment. Provided you have a reasonable belief that your disclosure is in the public interest, it does not matter whether or not your concern proves to be well founded.

2.2 Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform your Principal/Line Manager or a key Cognita contact (as set out at paragraph 6 below) immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our Grievances Procedure.

2.3 Any employee who victimises another because they have invoked this Policy will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Action Procedure and their actions may constitute gross misconduct.

2.4 The Company will not tolerate abuse of this Policy. If the investigation shows that untrue allegations were malicious and/or vexatious or made for personal gain then the School/Company will consider taking disciplinary action against that individual in accordance with the Disciplinary Action Policy.

2.5 You may decide that you want to raise a concern in confidence. Therefore, if you ask for your identity to be protected, it will not be disclosed without your consent. If a situation arises where it is not possible to deal with the concern without revealing your identity (for instance because your evidence is needed in court), there will be a discussion as to whether and how we can proceed.

3 How to raise your concern

3.1 If you have a concern about a wrongdoing, you should raise it in the first instance with your Principal/Line Manager either orally or in writing. They may be able to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. It will help if you state the facts of the matter clearly. If you have a direct or personal interest in the matter, you should also tell us at this stage. Please also see the Staff Code of Conduct Policy for how to make and record a 'neutral notification' if your concern relates to a staff member.

3.2 If you cannot raise the issue with your Principal/Line Manager (perhaps because it involves him/her), you should escalate it to his/her Manager or to a key Cognita contact as set out at paragraph 6 below.

- 3.3 When you have raised your concern, the School/Company will determine if it falls within the scope of this Policy. If not, you will be advised on how best to progress your concerns (eg by using the Grievances Procedure).
- 3.4 If your concern does fall within the scope of this Policy, the person to whom you have reported the issue (or a suitable authorised person) will initially assess what action should be taken and a meeting will be arranged with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You will be told who is handling the matter and how you can contact him/her. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information. Please be aware that the School/Company may not be able to discuss details with you but will endeavour to keep you well apprised of progress. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.
- 3.5 The School/Company cannot guarantee that all matters will be responded to in the way that you would like, but every reasonable effort will be made to handle the matter fairly and properly. If you are unhappy with the School/Company's response, you can escalate your concern to a key Cognita contact as set out at paragraph 6 below.
- 3.6 Where appropriate the School/Company will inform appropriate external bodies of any serious malpractice and/or concerns which come to light as a result of the investigation. In certain circumstances (eg child protection) the School/Company may need to do so before embarking on any investigation (see Managing Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy).
- 3.7 If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by further inquiry the matter will ordinarily be closed and no further action taken.
- 3.8 While the School/Company would prefer you to raise your concern openly, you may request that your disclosure is raised in confidence under this Policy. Where confidentially is requested, the School/Company will make every effort to resolve the concern without revealing your identity, this will be discussed with you and the available options will be explained.
- 3.9 NB: Remember, whilst we can deal with your concern even if you prefer to remain anonymous, if you do not tell us who you are, it will be much more difficult for us to investigate your concern or to give you feedback.

4. External Referrals and Child Protection concerns

- 4.1 The aim of this Policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.
- 4.2 In some exceptional circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an outside regulatory body. If in doubt please refer to the Human Resources Director, to the DfE guidance, or contact Ofsted's Whistleblower Hotline (0300 123 3155) or the charity Public Concern at Work's confidential helpline (020 7404 6609). These bodies can help you to determine whether this is the correct course of action.
- 4.3 If a member of staff raises a concern related to a child protection issue in a School, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Principal/Executive Principal should be informed immediately and where appropriate a referral to external bodies such as

Children's Social Services, MASH and/or the Local Authority Designated Officer ("LADO") should be made in accordance with the School's Code of Conduct and Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy. A member of staff may refer child protection concerns directly to these external bodies.

5 Exceptional circumstances

- 5.1 The School/Company will consider exceptional circumstances exist where you have a reasonable belief that: the School/Company will subject you to detriment if you inform your Principal/Line Manager; a cover-up is being mounted by the School/Company; or a disclosure made previously to your Principal/Line Manager and escalated to the Company Human Resources Director in accordance with the stages above has not prompted a satisfactory response.
- 5.2 Even when exceptional 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/Company may consider this to be Gross Misconduct and immediate disciplinary action may be taken against you.

6. Key Cognita contacts – external to the School

- 6.1 Please refer to the 'Safeguarding: Whistleblowing Policy' (which you are required to have signed as part of your Annual Staff Declaration to comply with our safeguarding practices) for key contacts within Cognita, in the event you wish to raise your concern external to the school. The safeguarding version is identical in content to this one, with the exception that it is a standalone policy and as such, the first page provides for specific key contacts for your school. These individuals may also be contacted if you have a concern that you do not wish to raise within your school and includes the following personnel; Director of Education, Independent Chair, Human Resources Director and Regional Chief Executive.

Ownership and consultation	
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Related documentation	
Related documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff ○ Cognita Employment Handbook: Anti-harassment Policy ○ Cognita Employment Handbook: Anti-workplace Bullying Policy ○ Cognita Employment Handbook: Disciplinary Action Policy ○ Cognita Employment Handbook: Grievances