

International School of Creative Arts

Whistleblowing Policy

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Introduction

International School of Creative Arts (ISCA) expects the highest standards of conduct from all staff and volunteers and will treat seriously any concern that is raised about illegal or improper conduct.

Employees are expected to share concerns about any serious impropriety or breach of procedure with the Head of School or Governing Body without fear of recrimination.

Definition of Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing has been defined as:

‘The disclosure by an employee or professional of confidential information which relates to some danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct connected with the work place, be it of the employee or his/her fellow employees’.

(Public Concern at Work Guidelines 1997).

Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

- Give members of staff the confidence to raise concerns about conduct or practice which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice or is inconsistent with school standards and policies so that s/he is encouraged to act on those concerns.
- Provide members of staff with avenues to raise concerns.
- Ensure that members of staff receive a response to the concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken.
- Offer assurance that members of staff are protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing action undertaken in good faith.

Examples of illegal and/ or improper conduct

- Unlawful conduct.
- Miscarriages of justice in the conduct of statutory or other processes.
- Failure to comply with a statutory or legal obligation.
- Potential maladministration, misconduct or malpractice.
- Health and safety issues including risks to the public as well as risks to pupils and members of staff.
- Action that has caused or is likely to cause danger to the environment.
- Abuse of authority.
- Unauthorised use of public or other funds.
- Fraud or corruption.
- Breaches of financial regulations or policies.
- Mistreatment of any person.
- Action that has caused or is likely to cause physical danger to any person or risk serious damage to school property.
- Unfair discrimination or favouritism.
- Racist incidents or acts, or racial harassment
- Any attempt to prevent disclosure of any of the issues listed.

Child protection concerns

All employees and volunteers are expected to report any safeguarding and child protection concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Head of School as stated in the child protection/ safeguarding policy.

Such concerns may relate to:

- The physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect of a child.
- An inappropriate or improper relationship between an adult and a pupil.

Where a member of staff disagrees with a decision by the Designated Safeguarding Lead not to consult the LADO, or is concerned that the LADO will not be appropriately consulted – and it is believed that the child/children could remain at risk of significant harm – the person with this concern should make direct contact with the LADO (see Child Protection Policy for contact details).

Anonymous allegations

Allegations can be made anonymously. However, this policy encourages staff to put their name to their allegation, as concerns expressed anonymously are often much more difficult to investigate. For example, we may need to contact the person making the allegation to obtain further information or verify the details they have already given us.

Anonymous allegations will be considered wherever possible at the discretion of the school. The factors to be taken into account when determining whether an investigation in such a case can proceed would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other, attributable sources

Harassment or victimisation

ISCA recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal. We will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect staff when they raise a concern in good faith.

However, should a member of staff feel that they have suffered harassment, either directly or indirectly as a result of raising a concern, they should refer to the school's Equal Opportunities policy.

Confidentiality

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of a whistle blower. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality, if a whistle blower is required to come forward as a witness.

Unsubstantiated allegations

If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however, an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action is likely to be taken.

Protection and support for ‘whistle blowers’

It is understandable that ‘whistle blowers’ are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. ISCA aims to encourage openness and will support employees who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Employees will not suffer any detrimental treatment resulting from raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment would include dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If an employee believes that he or she has suffered any such treatment, he or she should inform the Executive Director or Head of School immediately. If the matter is not remedied the member of staff should raise it formally using ISCA’s Grievance Procedure.

Employees must not threaten or retaliate against ‘whistle blowers’ in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. All employees are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing.

Procedure for whistleblowing

As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with the Head of School, in writing or verbally. If you do not wish to raise your concern with the Head of School, you should refer to the Executive Director or, alternatively, the Chairman of the Board.

The Head of School, the Executive Director or the Chairman of the Board (depending who receives the concern) will appoint an appropriate person to deal with your concern.

The appointed person will:

- Provide a written response acknowledging receipt of the concern and notifying what will happen next (unless it was an anonymous allegation).
- Look into the allegation - seeking evidence and interviewing witnesses as necessary.
- Maintain confidentiality wherever possible but be mindful that there is no guarantee that the whistle blower can remain anonymous.
- If appropriate, for concerns of criminal behaviour, refer the matter to the Police.
- If appropriate, for concerns of child protection, refer the matter to the local authority officer designated to lead on child protection (LADO) or the local authority social services designated manager for child protection (First Response Team). The whistleblowing process will be halted until the statutory authorities have completed their investigations and confirmed that it is appropriate to continue with the whistleblowing process.

If the person appointed by the governing body needs to talk to you, you are permitted to be accompanied by a trade union or professional association representative or a fellow member of staff not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

The target is to complete the inquiry in a timely manner and write to all relevant parties to keep them informed of what is happening (if appropriate).

Raising a concern to someone outside the School

If you feel you cannot express your concerns within the school, it is open to you to raise your concern with someone outside the school such as:

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) if the matter is about child protection or safeguarding issues.
- Police.

- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations.
- Department for Education.
- Independent School Inspectorate

You can also seek independent advice from:

Protect

Helpline: 020 3117 2520

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

Protect offers free, confidential advice to individuals concerned about wrongdoing in their workplace. They support whistleblowers in raising concerns safely and in line with legal protections.