



## **LIFEFORTE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS**

### **WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY**

#### **2025/2026 Session**

Lifeforte International Schools is committed to the highest possible standards of integrity, transparency, openness and accountability. As a Christian school it seeks to conduct its affairs in a godly and responsible manner, to ensure that all its activities are open and effectively managed, and that honesty and principles of public interest disclosure are upheld at all times.

In line with that commitment we encourage employees, those working on behalf of the school and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the schools' operations to come forward and voice those concerns with a member of the senior management team. Where a member of staff decides to report a serious incident, whether anonymous or not, this disclosure will be treated as 'protected' i.e. the school will ensure that there will be no adverse repercussions for the member of staff.

#### **Purpose of the Policy:**

Employees due to their role or proximity are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the school. They may however, be reluctant to share their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school or for fear of negative repercussion. It is important for employees at Lifeforte to realise that they not only have a right, but also a duty to report any improper actions or failure of actions.

Employees who raise concerns regarding malpractice or wrongdoing are an asset to the school, not a threat. This policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the school and to know they can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. Although this can be difficult it is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk bearing in mind that it is often the most vulnerable children or young person who is targeted. These children need someone to speak up to safeguard their welfare.

#### **Whistle blowing is encouraged;**

- To prevent a situation from worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To safeguard children
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself

#### **What stops people from 'whistle blowing'**

- Starting a chain of events which spiral
- Disrupting work or events
- Fear of getting it wrong
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers
- Fear of not being believed

Thus the aim of this policy is to:

- encourage staff to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act appropriately upon their concerns
- provide avenues to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- ensure that staff receive a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied
- re-assure staff that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have reasonable belief that they have made any disclosure in good faith.

### **Who does this policy apply to?**

The policy applies to all school employees whether full-time or part-time, permanent or temporary; members of the school staff and those carrying out work for the school on school premises. It also covers providers of works, services and supplies, including the school's external contractors and those providing services under a contract with the school in their own premises. However, in this policy, the terms 'staff' or 'members of staff' have been used, with the intention to cover all individuals mentioned above.

### **Scope of the policy**

The school's Employee Handbook details the procedures to enable employees lodge a grievance relating to their employment. The whistle blowing policy is intended to cover serious concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

1. Conduct which is an offence or breach of the law
2. Failure to comply with a legal obligation
3. Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
4. Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees/staff
5. Damage to the environment
6. Information relating to the above issues that have been or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

Examples of the above categories are likely to include:

- i. sexual, physical or emotional abuse of members of staff or students
- ii. health and safety issues including risks to the public as well as risks to students and members of staff
- iii. action that has caused or is likely to cause physical danger to any person or risk serious damage to school property
- iv. unlawful conduct
- v. miscarriages of justice in the conduct of statutory or other processes
- vi. failure to comply with a statutory or legal obligation
- vii. potential maladministration, misconduct or malpractice
- viii. action that has caused or is likely to cause danger to the environment
- ix. abuse of authority
- x. unauthorised use of public or other funds
- xi. fraud or corruption
- xii. breaches of financial regulations or policies
- xiii. mistreatment of any person
- xiv. unfair discrimination or favouritism
- xv. racist incidents or acts, or racial harassment and

- xvi. any attempt to prevent disclosure of any of the issues listed.
- xvii. Inappropriate use of social media and other technologies

Therefore, any serious concerns that a member of staff has about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of those in governance or leadership, school employees, others acting on behalf of the school or service users, can be reported under the whistle blowing policy where the member of staff has a reasonable belief in those concerns and they relate to one of the specific areas set out above.

### **Safeguarding against harassment or victimisation**

The school is committed to good practice and high standards and is supportive of employees. We recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If a member of staff has a reasonable belief that what they are saying is true, they have nothing to fear because they will be doing their duty to their employer and/or those for whom they provide a service.

The school will take a zero tolerance approach to any act of harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures). The school will take appropriate action to protect staff when they raise a concern, by supporting the member of staff and consider action under the appropriate procedure (for example disciplinary) against the person or persons responsible for the reported acts, provided the member of staff:

1. Discloses the information in good faith
2. Has reasonable grounds for believing the concern is true
3. Does not act maliciously or make false allegations
4. Does not seek any personal gain, and
5. Provided the allegations relate to one of the categories covered by the scope of the policy and referred to above.

### **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 may be taken.

### **Confidentiality**

All concerns will be treated in confidence but at the appropriate time, the whistle blower may be asked to come forward as a witness, and this will be discussed with them.

### **Anonymous allegations**

This policy encourages staff to put their name to their allegation whenever possible.

The school will take all concerns raised seriously. When carrying out an initial review of a concern, the school will consider the following factors:

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

### **How to raise a concern**

- Staff members may raise concerns firstly with the principal where the issue involves another staff member or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where the issue involves a student.
- If the concern is about the Principal, the CEO should be contacted.

- Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff members who wish to make a written report are asked to provide the background and history of the concern (including relevant dates) and the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation.
- The earlier the concern is expressed, the easier it is to take action. In order to assist with investigation, staff members should provide as much detail and supporting evidence as possible.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove that an allegation is true, only to have sufficient grounds for concern.

#### **The school will respond by**

- Taking the concern seriously
- Considering the concerns fully and objectively
- Recognising that raising a concern can be a difficult experience for employees
- Ensuring confidentiality
- Agreeing the level at which the concern will be investigated and identify who will take responsibility for coordinating the enquiry.

Staff members who are under investigation will not be involved in the investigation.

#### **Initial enquiry**

In order to protect the individuals and ensure fairness towards those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

Purpose of the initial enquiry is to ascertain if the conduct or behaviour involves a member of the school staff, a member of the leadership team or other member of staff, so that further enquiries and investigation can be progressed accordingly.

#### **Preliminary enquiry**

Preliminary enquiry establishes the need to carry out an investigation. Further to the results of the initial and preliminary enquiries, and at the discretion of the CEO, the following steps will then need to be considered:

- Concerns or allegations, which fall within the scope of specific procedures, e.g. child protection and safeguarding or discrimination issues, will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures
- Where there is any financial impropriety, the concern should be further referred to the CEO, before taking any other action.
- Matters of a criminal nature will be reported to the Police.
- Whether the disciplinary or other relevant management policies, procedures and processes of the school need to be applied.
- Appointment of an official of the school by the CEO to carry out the investigation under these procedures.

#### **Investigation**

Depending on the nature of the concern, investigations may be carried out under the school's disciplinary policy.

#### **Investigation timeline**

Within 2 days of a report being received, the person who is dealing with the concern raised will respond in writing:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received
- Supplying information on staff support mechanisms, and
- Advising whether further investigations or action is required and, if not, why not.

A further update will also be provided 5 days after the report was received, advising of additional progress made and the estimated date a final response will be available.

If the whistle blower has chosen to remain anonymous and non-contactable, they need to contact their original whistle blowing route in order to receive updates.

### **Investigation process**

The official appointed to undertake the investigation will establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can be resolved internally. Other people may need to be interviewed to provide further information and/or clarification concerning the issue(s) raised.

It is essential that written records of all interviews be kept throughout the investigation, together with written details of any action taken. The investigation will result in a written report and recommendations for corrective action which will be passed to the CEO.

Where any meeting is arranged involving an individual member of staff, which can be off-site, a work colleague may also attend. The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties which may be experienced as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if a member of staff is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the school will arrange for them to receive appropriate procedural and/or legal advice.

A member of staff raising a concern will be, subject to legal constraints, advised in writing of the outcome of the investigation and, where appropriate, what action is being taken.

### **Monitoring arrangements**

The CEO in consultation with the senior management team has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy.

The CEO and senior management team will ensure that the whistle blowing procedures are defined, documented, widely circulated and reviewed at appropriate intervals.

The practical aspects of monitoring are to assess whether:

- The policy is being used appropriately
- Concerns are being handled and investigated properly
- There are any discernible patterns of concern across the school
- The policy has been effective in identifying and deterring malpractice, and
- More needs to be done to raise awareness of the policy.

This policy should be read in accordance with the

Child Protection and Safeguarding policy,  
Staff Handbook