

Tenby International School Setia EcoHill Whistleblowing Policy

Policy	Whistleblowing Policy			
Approval Date:	August 2024		Next review:	August 2026
Review Cycle:	1 Year			
Scope	Whole Group	☐	Whole School	☐
	International Primary	☐	National Primary	☐
	International Secondary	☐	National Secondary	☐
Ownership:	Designated Safeguarding Lead		Approved by:	Group Health and Safety Director

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PURPOSE

To set out the policy of Terengganu International School Setia Ecohill (from now on referred to as TISSEH) and the procedure for dealing with concerns raised by employees which relate to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work (see paragraph 3).

Allegations of child abuse against teachers and other staff and volunteers are to be dealt with in accordance the school Safeguarding Policy.

TISSEH is committed to tackling fraud, abuse and other forms of malpractice and, therefore, has introduced this procedure to enable employees, officers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, casual workers and agency workers (from now on collectively referred to as “colleagues”) to raise their concerns about such malpractice at an early stage and in the correct way.

Background

As colleagues are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the school, it is important that they feel able to express their concerns without fear of harassment or victimisation, otherwise they may find it easier to ignore the concern rather than report it. ISP recognises this fact and is designed to protect colleagues, who make certain disclosures of information in ‘the public interest’, from detriment and/or dismissal. This policy builds on the provisions of this.

TISSEH is committed to the highest possible standard of operation, probity, and accountability. In line with that commitment, those colleagues with serious concerns are encouraged to come forward and voice those concerns. This policy document makes it clear that raising a concern should be done so without fear of reprisals; it is intended to encourage and enable colleagues to raise serious concerns within the school rather than overlooking a problem or alerting anyone external to the school.

This policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- provide avenues for colleagues to raise concerns internally as a matter of course, and receive feedback on any action taken
- provide for matters to be dealt with quickly and appropriately; and ensure that concerns are taken seriously and treated consistently and fairly
- reassure colleagues that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing where they have a genuine concern

- allow colleagues to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with TISSEH's response

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the matters below. If colleagues have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities (a whistleblowing concern) they should report it under this policy without delay.

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- criminal activity
- miscarriages of justice
- danger to health and safety
- damage to the environment
- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements
- bribery
- financial fraud or mismanagement
- negligence
- breach of our internal policies and procedures
- conduct likely to damage our reputation
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- public examination fraud
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters

Before initiating the procedure, colleagues should consider the following:

- the responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all colleagues
- colleagues should use line manager or team meetings and other opportunities to raise questions and seek clarification on issues which are of day-to-day concern
- whilst it can be difficult to raise concerns about the practice or behaviour of a colleague, all must act to prevent an escalation of the problem and to prevent themselves being potentially implicated

This policy should not be used for complaints about an employee's personal circumstances, such as the way s/he has been treated at work. In these cases, an employee should use the school's Grievance Procedure. If the matter relates to salary, the salary review procedures documented in the school's pay policy should be referenced.

Safeguards:

Harassment or Victimisation

TISSEH recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice. TISSEH will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect colleagues when they have a genuine concern.

This does not mean that if an employee is already the subject of internal procedures such as disciplinary or redundancy, that those procedures will be halted as a result of that employee raising a concern under the whistleblowing policy.

Confidentiality

We hope that colleagues will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. TISSEH will make every effort to protect a colleague's identity if confidentiality is requested.

As indicated above, identity will be protected as far as possible, but should the investigation into the concern require the colleague to be named as the source of the information, this will be discussed with the colleague before their name is disclosed.

Anonymous Allegations

Colleagues are encouraged to put their name to an allegation or concern. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information and it is also more difficult to establish whether allegations are credible. Anonymous allegations will be considered at the discretion of the Campus Principal.

In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

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

Untrue Allegations

If a colleague makes an allegation where s/he has a genuine concern, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against that colleague. If, however, we conclude that an employee has made malicious or vexatious allegations, or with a view to personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against that colleague.

Unfounded Allegations

Following investigation, allegations may be confirmed as unfounded. This outcome will be notified to the colleague who raised the concern, who will be informed that the School deems the matter to be concluded and that it should not be raised again unless new evidence becomes available.

Support to Colleagues

It is recognised that raising concerns can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support will be made available, as appropriate, to both the colleague(s) raising the concerns and any colleague(s) subject to investigation.

Colleagues may wish to consult with a trusted member of SLT to discuss the specifics to their setting.

Vested Interest

Any colleague whose relative/friend is the subject of a complaint will not be involved in the handling of the complaint.

1. How to raise a Concern

As a first step, a colleague should normally raise concerns with their immediate manager or their manager's superior. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues and who is involved. For example, if a colleague believes that their immediate manager or their manager's superior is involved, s/he should approach the Campus Principal. An employee (including the Campus Principal and members of the leadership team) can by-pass the direct management line and the School Management if s/he feels the overall management of a school is engaged in an improper course of action. Should the concern be regarding improper courses of action within the Regional Office then in this case please refer to section 7 below.

Concerns are better raised in writing. The colleague should set out the background and history of the concerns, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reasons why s/he is particularly concerned about the situation. If a colleague does not feel able to put the concern in writing, s/he should telephone or meet the appropriate person. It is important that, however the concern is raised, the colleague makes it clear that s/he is raising the issue via the whistleblowing policy and procedure.

The earlier a colleague expresses the concern, the easier it is to take action.

Although a colleague is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, s/he will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for the concern.

At each meeting under this policy the colleague may bring a workplace companion. The companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation. Additionally, the companion must not be directly involved in the case.

2. The Role of Senior Managers

A Senior Manager may be informed by an employee about concern(s) and that s/he is "blowing the whistle" within the procedure in person, or in writing or over the phone.

The Senior Manager should respond immediately by arranging to meet with the colleague to discuss the concern(s) as soon as possible.

Stage One

At the initial meeting, the Senior Manager should establish that:

- there is genuine cause and sufficient grounds for the concern
- the concern has been appropriately raised via the Whistleblowing Policy

The Senior Manager should ask the colleague to put their concern(s) in writing if s/he has not already done so. If the colleague is unable to do this the Senior Manager will take down a written summary of his/her concern/s and provide him/her with a copy after the meeting. The Senior Manager should make notes of the discussions with the colleague. The colleague's letter and/or Senior Manager's notes should make it clear that the colleague is raising the issue via the whistle-blowing procedure and provide:

- the background and history of the concerns
- names, dates and places (where possible)
- the reasons why the colleague is particularly concerned about the situation

The colleague should be asked to date and sign their letter and/or the notes of any discussion. The Senior Manager should positively encourage the colleague to do this, as a concern expressed anonymously is much less powerful and much more difficult to address, especially if the letter/notes become evidence in other proceedings, e.g., an internal disciplinary hearing.

The Senior Manager should follow the policy as set out above and explain to the colleague:

- who s/he will need to speak to determine the next steps (e.g., Campus Principal)
- what steps s/he intends to take to address the concern
- how s/he will communicate with the colleague during and at the end of the process
(It should be noted that the need for confidentiality may prevent the school giving the colleague specific details of any necessary investigation or any necessary disciplinary action taken as a result)
- that the colleague will receive a written response within ten working days
- that their identity will be protected as far as possible, but should the investigation into the concern require the colleague to be named as the source of the information, that this will be discussed with the colleague before their name is disclosed
- that the Campus Principal will do all that it can to protect the colleague from discrimination and/or victimisation
- that the matter will be taken seriously and investigated immediately

- that if the colleague's concern, though raised as a genuine concern, is not confirmed by the investigation, no punitive action will be taken against them
- that if clear evidence is uncovered during the investigation that s/he has made a malicious or vexatious allegation, disciplinary action may be taken against them
- the investigation may confirm their allegations to be unfounded in which case the School will deem the matter to be concluded unless new evidence becomes available

Stage Two

Following the initial meeting with the employee, the Senior Manager should consult with the Campus Principal of the school, who in turn will liaise with the Regional Office to determine whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. A record should be made of the decisions and/or agreed actions.

It may be necessary, with anonymous allegations, to consider whether it is possible to take any further action.

When making this decision, Senior Managers should take the following factors into account:

- the seriousness of the issue(s) raised
- the credibility of the concern(s)
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation(s) from attributable sources

(In some cases, it may be possible to resolve the concern(s) simply, by agreed action or an explanation regarding the concern(s), without the need for further investigation)

However, depending on the nature of the concern(s) it may be necessary for the concern(s) to:

- be investigated internally
- be referred to the ISP London
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry

Senior Managers should have a working knowledge and understanding of the other TISSEH school policies and procedures, e.g., grievance, disciplinary, harassment, child protection procedures, to ensure that concerns raised by colleagues are addressed via the appropriate procedure/process.

Stage Three

Within ten working days of a concern being received, the manager receiving the concern (at paragraph 5.1 above) must write to the colleague:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how they propose to deal with the matter
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response

- telling the colleague whether any initial enquiries have been made; and
- telling the colleague whether further investigations will take place, and if not why not
- letting the colleague know when s/he will receive further details if the situation is not yet resolved

3. Raising Concerns Outside the School

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigation and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases the colleague should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for the colleague to report his/her concerns to ISP in London. It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. Colleagues are strongly encouraged to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external (outside of the school setting). If a colleague is not satisfied with the School's response, the manager should ensure that s/he is made aware with whom s/he may raise the matter externally, via:

- ISP London
- a recognised trade union
- a senior officer of the Local Authority
- an external auditor
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- a solicitor

The manager should stress to the colleague that if s/he chooses to take a concern outside the School, it is the colleague's responsibility to ensure that confidential information is not disclosed, i.e., confidential information, in whatever format, is not handed over to a third party.

4. Monitoring and Review

The School will be responsible for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy/procedure with delegated operational function passed to the School's Leadership Team. The policy is prepared by the Campus Principal in conjunction with model policies obtained from EPM and in early version(s) formed using content from legacy school policies of the member schools of TIS Group.

The policy/procedure will be reviewed by the Campus Principal at least every two years more frequently as necessary.

Version History

Table of Versions

VERSION	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	DATE
1.2	Policy approved by SLT and school HR manager then published	Martin Shelly	15-08-2024
1.1	Draft TISSEH Policy created.	Martin Shelly	15-08-2024
1.0	Policy approved by SLT and school HR manager then published	Martin Shelly	15-08-2024