

## INTRODUCTION

Winchmore Tutors recognises that whistleblowing is an important safeguarding tool that helps create and maintain a culture of openness, accountability and child protection.

The welfare of children and young people is paramount. All staff, tutors, contractors, volunteers, agency workers and consultants have a responsibility to raise concerns where they believe that a child may be at risk of harm, that safeguarding procedures are not being followed, or that professional conduct may place children at risk.

Concerns should always be raised where a child's safety, welfare or wellbeing may be compromised.

Safeguarding concerns will always take precedence over organisational reputation, professional relationships or confidentiality requirements.

## Statutory and Legal Framework

This policy is informed by:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Alternative Provision Statutory Guidance
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

This policy should be read alongside the following Winchmore Tutors policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies
- Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Lone Working Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Complaints Policy

**This policy applies to:**

- Employees
- Tutors
- Contractors
- Agency staff
- Volunteers
- Consultants
- Board members
- Directors
- Apprentices
- Anyone working on behalf of Winchmore Tutors

## QUALIFYING DISCLOSURES

Certain disclosures are prescribed by law as “qualifying disclosures”. A “qualifying disclosure” means a disclosure of information that the employee genuinely and reasonably believes is in the public interest and shows that the company has committed a “relevant failure” by:

- committing a criminal offence;
- failing to comply with a legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- endangering the health and safety of an individual;
- environmental damage; or
- concealing any information relating to the above.

These acts can be in the past, present or future, so that, for example, a disclosure qualifies if it relates to environmental damage that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen. The company will take any concerns that you may raise relating to the above matters very seriously.

The Employment Rights Act 1996 provides protection for workers who ‘blow the whistle’ where they reasonably believe that some form of illegality, injustice or breach of health and safety has occurred or is likely to occur. The disclosure has to be “in the public interest”. We encourage you to use the procedure to raise any such concerns.

Safeguarding concerns may include:

- Concerns about the conduct of adults working with children.
- Failure to follow safeguarding procedures.
- Unsafe professional practice.
- Poor safeguarding culture.
- Failure to respond appropriately to concerns.
- Breaches of professional boundaries.
- Concerns regarding online safety.
- Concerns arising during home tuition.
- Lone-working concerns.
- Practice which places children at risk of harm.

Concerns may relate to conduct that occurs:

- During tuition sessions.
- In schools.
- In homes.
- Online.
- During travel.
- At external venues.
- Outside working hours.

Behaviour outside of work may still raise safeguarding concerns where it could indicate that an individual poses a risk to children or may be unsuitable to work with children.

**Safeguarding concerns should never be ignored because they appear minor in isolation.**

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## Complaints, Grievances and Safeguarding Concerns

This policy is not intended to replace existing procedures for complaints, grievances or safeguarding referrals.

### Complaints:

Concerns about service delivery received from parents, pupils, schools or other stakeholders should normally be managed through the Complaints Policy.

### Grievances:

Concerns relating to an employee's own employment circumstances should normally be managed through the Grievance Procedure.

### Safeguarding Referrals:

Any concern that a child may be at risk of harm must be reported immediately through safeguarding procedures and should not wait for complaints or grievance processes.

Where there is uncertainty, the concern should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will determine the appropriate process.

## Role of the DSL

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) has responsibility for:

- Receiving safeguarding-related whistleblowing concerns.
- Reviewing safeguarding risks.
- Determining whether external agencies should be involved.
- Consulting Children's Social Care where appropriate.
- Consulting the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where concerns involve adults working with children.
- Ensuring concerns are recorded appropriately.
- Providing safeguarding oversight to investigations.

The DSL must ensure that safeguarding concerns are managed without delay.

## The Procedure

A concern should be raised as soon as possible when an individual becomes aware of an issue.

Reports should include, where possible:

- Details of the concern.
- Names of individuals involved.
- Dates, times, and locations.
- Any supporting evidence available.

Concerns may be reported to:

### Primary Contact

Craig Varney – Director & Designated Safeguarding Lead

Email: [craigv@winchmoretutors.com](mailto:craigv@winchmoretutors.com)

Telephone: 01372 940 809

#### Alternative Contact

Dan Stagg – Compliance Manager & Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Email: dan@winchmoretutors.com

Telephone: 01372 940 808

#### Where concerns involve:

- The DSL
- Deputy DSL
- Director

#### the concern should be escalated directly to:

- Another Director.
- Independent safeguarding adviser.
- The LADO.
- Children's Social Care.
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline.

No member of staff should feel prevented from raising concerns because a senior leader is involved.

### External Safeguarding Escalation

Where concerns indicate that a child may be suffering or at risk of significant harm, referrals may be made to:

- Children's Social Care Front Door Services
- Police
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Staff may make direct referrals where they believe a child is at immediate risk and should then inform the DSL as soon as possible.

### Confidentiality

While confidentiality will be respected wherever possible, safeguarding responsibilities override confidentiality where there is a concern that:

- A child may be at risk of harm.
- An adult may pose a risk to children.
- A criminal offence may have occurred.

Information will be shared on a lawful and proportionate basis to safeguard children and young people.

### Lone Working and Alternative Provision

Staff working in one-to-one tuition, online tuition, home tuition and Alternative Provision environments should recognise that lone working can increase safeguarding risks.

Examples include:

- Boundary concerns.
- Unsafe professional practice.
- Failure to follow risk assessments.
- Professional isolation.
- Unreported incidents.
- Allegations against staff.

Any concern arising within lone-working arrangements should be reported immediately through safeguarding or whistleblowing procedures.

### **Anonymous Reports**

Anonymous reports will be considered and investigated where appropriate.

However, anonymous reporting can make investigation more difficult and may limit the company's ability to provide feedback.

Individuals are encouraged to identify themselves wherever possible.

### **Investigation Process**

Upon receipt of a whistleblowing report:

The concern will be acknowledged within five working days where possible.

An initial assessment will be undertaken.

An investigator will be appointed where necessary.

Appropriate enquiries and evidence gathering will take place.

Corrective action will be implemented where wrongdoing is identified.

Feedback will be provided to the whistleblower where appropriate and lawful.

Investigations will be conducted promptly, impartially, and confidentially.

### **Treatment By Others**

Bullying, harassment or any other detrimental treatment afforded to a colleague who has made a qualifying disclosure is unacceptable. Anyone found to have acted in such a manner will be subject to disciplinary action.

Further information and support is available from the following organisations;

- The Whistleblowing Helpline – 08000 724 725 or [enquiries@wbhelpline.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wbhelpline.org.uk)
- Public concern at Work – 020 7404 6609 or <http://www.pcaw.org.uk/individual-advice/information-and-advice-services>
- The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line – 0800 028 0285 or [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

Winchmore Tutors expects all staff to demonstrate professional curiosity and speak up where concerns arise.

All concerns will be taken seriously, investigated appropriately and used to strengthen safeguarding practice and improve outcomes for children and young people.

A failure to report safeguarding concerns may itself be treated as a safeguarding matter.

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Review Date: July 2027

Signed:



Craig Varney : Director