

SPEAK UP • BE HEARD • BE PROTECTED

Whistleblowing (Speak Up) Policy

Hindle's School of Excellence Limited

Document owner	Director	Approved by	Director
Version	3.0	Approval date	5 September 2026
Review cycle	Annually	Next review	September 2027
Applies to	Employees, workers and relevant contractors	Site	115 Rochdale Road, Bury, BL9 7BA
Speak up early Hindle's wants concerns about wrongdoing, risk or concealment to be raised promptly. A person does not need proof before speaking up, but should have a reasonable belief that the information tends to show wrongdoing and, for statutory protection, that disclosure is in the public interest.			

1. Purpose

This policy provides a safe route for workers to report suspected wrongdoing connected with Hindle's School of Excellence Limited. It explains what whistleblowing is, how to raise a concern, how Hindle's will respond and the protection available against retaliation.

The policy reflects the Employment Rights Act 1996 as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. It is not contractual and may be updated following changes in law or guidance.

2. Who may use this policy

Employees, workers, agency staff, trainees, apprentices and relevant contractors should use this policy. Statutory whistleblowing protection depends on the individual's legal status and how and to whom the disclosure is made. Volunteers may use the same reporting routes and will be protected by Hindle's from retaliation under this policy, although volunteers are not generally covered by the statutory whistleblowing provisions.

Learners, parents/carers and members of the public should normally use the Safeguarding or Complaints procedures. Hindle's will still act promptly if information from any person indicates that someone is unsafe or serious wrongdoing may have occurred.

3. What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which the person reasonably believes is in the public interest and tends to show one or more of the following:

- a criminal offence;
- a failure to comply with a legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- danger to the health or safety of any person;

- damage to the environment; or
- deliberate concealment of information about any of these matters.

School-related examples may include safeguarding failures, covering up allegations, unsafe staffing or premises, fraud or theft, misuse of public or commissioned funds, bribery, serious data-security failures, unlawful discrimination, falsification of records, exam malpractice or repeated failure to comply with legal duties.

4. Whistleblowing, safeguarding, complaints and grievances

A personal employment complaint—such as an individual disagreement about pay, hours, treatment or management—will usually be considered under the Grievance Policy unless it also raises a public-interest wrongdoing. Complaints about service quality are normally handled under the Complaints Policy.

A concern that a child, young person or adult at risk has suffered or may suffer harm must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) under safeguarding procedures. Concerns or allegations about an adult working with children must follow the Managing Allegations and low-level concerns arrangements. If the concern involves the DSL or Director, or reporting internally may place someone at risk, use the alternative or external routes in this policy. Immediate danger or suspected serious crime should be reported to emergency services or police.

5. Our commitments

- take genuine concerns seriously and assess risk promptly;
- not require the reporter to investigate or prove the allegation;
- protect confidentiality as far as reasonably and lawfully possible;
- not tolerate dismissal, disadvantage, threats, bullying or other retaliation for raising a concern;
- make reasonable adjustments so disabled people can use the procedure;
- avoid conflicts of interest when appointing the person who handles a concern;
- keep proportionate records and provide feedback where possible; and
- take appropriate action when wrongdoing or control failures are identified.

6. How to raise a concern internally

A concern may be raised verbally or in writing. Use the most appropriate route; the steps do not have to be followed in order where the matter is serious or a conflict exists.

1. Raise the concern with the Director, Joanne C. Hindle, unless the concern involves her or there is another good reason not to.
2. For a safeguarding concern, contact the DSL or deputy DSL immediately. If the concern involves the DSL/Director, report to the relevant local-authority safeguarding service or other appropriate external body.

3. If the concern involves the Director, send it to an independent senior person nominated by Hindle's, the placing school/local authority contract lead where relevant, or an appropriate prescribed person/regulator.

Contact for the Director: Hindle's School of Excellence Limited, 115 Rochdale Road, Bury, BL9 7BA. A concern should be clearly marked "Private and confidential – whistleblowing". It may also be delivered using the school's current published telephone or email contact details.

7. Information to provide

- the nature of the concern and why it is believed to be in the public interest;
- relevant dates, locations and people;
- what has been seen, heard or discovered, distinguishing fact from opinion;
- any immediate risk to a learner, worker or the public;
- available records or evidence and where they can lawfully be found;
- whether the concern has been raised before and what happened; and
- how the reporter can be contacted and any confidentiality or adjustment needs.

Do not confront suspected persons, carry out covert or unsafe enquiries, access records without authority, remove originals, or delay reporting while trying to obtain proof. Preserve information lawfully and securely.

8. Anonymous and confidential reports

A person may request that their identity is kept confidential. Hindle's will limit disclosure to those who need the information to assess or investigate the concern, unless disclosure is required by law or necessary for a fair process. Where possible, the reporter will be told before their identity is disclosed.

Anonymous concerns will be considered, taking account of seriousness, credibility and the ability to verify the information. Anonymity may restrict investigation, protection and feedback. Hindle's cannot promise that others will not infer a reporter's identity.

9. Initial response and risk assessment

The recipient will record the concern securely, check immediate safeguarding and safety risks, confirm receipt where contact details are available, and decide who should manage the matter. Where practicable, acknowledgement will be sent within five working days. Urgent concerns will be acted on immediately.

The initial assessment will consider whether the issue falls under whistleblowing, safeguarding, grievance, disciplinary, complaints, data breach, health and safety, fraud or another procedure; whether specialist or external referral is required; and how evidence, confidentiality and conflicts will be managed.

10. Investigation and outcome

Hindle's may conduct a proportionate internal review, appoint an independent investigator, audit records, commission specialist advice or refer the matter to a placing body, local authority, regulator, police or other competent authority. The subject of an allegation will be treated fairly and no conclusion will be assumed before evidence is considered.

Where possible, the reporter will be told who is handling the concern, whether further information is needed, an indicative timescale and when to expect an update. At the end, Hindle's will confirm that the matter has been considered and, where lawful, whether action was taken. Confidential employment, safeguarding or legal information may limit the detail that can be provided.

11. Protection from detriment and retaliation

Hindle's will not subject a person to retaliation for raising a concern honestly on the basis of information they reasonably believe tends to show wrongdoing. Retaliation includes dismissal, reduced hours, threats, bullying, isolation, loss of opportunities, adverse references or pressure to withdraw a concern. Suspected retaliation must be reported immediately and may lead to disciplinary or contractual action.

A person is not expected to prove the concern and will not be penalised merely because it is not substantiated. A disclosure known to be false and made with a deliberate intention to harm may be dealt with under the relevant conduct procedure after a fair investigation. This does not apply to an honestly held but mistaken concern.

12. External disclosures and independent advice

The law protects certain disclosures made to the employer, a legal adviser, a prescribed person or, in more limited circumstances, another external body. The conditions vary, so independent advice should be sought before making a wider disclosure. Reporting to the media will only be protected in limited circumstances.

- Protect (independent whistleblowing advice): protect-advice.org.uk;
- Acas helpline and guidance: acas.org.uk;
- GOV.UK list of prescribed persons and bodies: gov.uk/whistleblowing;
- Ofsted, where the concern falls within its remit for inspected or regulated education or childcare;
- Health and Safety Executive for relevant workplace safety matters;
- Information Commissioner's Office for relevant data-protection matters; and
- police or emergency services where crime or immediate danger is suspected.

A report must be made to a body that is appropriate for the subject matter. The inclusion of an organisation above does not guarantee that a disclosure meets the statutory conditions or falls within that organisation's remit.

13. Data protection and record keeping

Whistleblowing records will be stored securely with restricted access and retained under the Disposal of Records Schedule. Personal information will be processed lawfully and only to the extent necessary to assess, investigate, protect people, take action and meet legal duties. Records will distinguish allegations, evidence, findings and decisions.

14. Monitoring, training and assurance

The Director will ensure staff know how to speak up and that managers understand safeguarding escalation, confidentiality, conflicts of interest and protection from retaliation. An anonymised log will record the type of concern, action, timescale and learning. Trends and control failures will be reviewed without identifying reporters unnecessarily.

15. Review and approval

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner after a significant concern, legal or guidance change, identified weakness or relevant feedback.

Approved by	Joanne C. Hindle, Director
Signature	
Approval date	5 September 2026
Next review	September 2027

Speak-up checklist

Do	Do not
Report promptly, especially where someone may be unsafe.	Wait until you have proof.
State what you know and identify what is opinion.	Investigate, confront or accuse people yourself.
Use an appropriate internal or external route.	Share the concern widely or on social media.
Keep lawful records and evidence secure.	Remove, alter or unlawfully access records.
Ask for confidentiality or an adjustment if needed.	Promise witnesses complete secrecy.
Report any retaliation immediately.	Assume an anonymous report cannot be considered.