



## FREEDOM TO SPEAK UP POLICY

Originator	Reviewed by	Date of Review	Approved by	Date of Approval	Next Review Date	Website
School	R&A	10/05/2021	Board	24/05/2021	May 2023	Yes

### Vision Statement

#### 'Creating an irresistible climate for achievement'

- We challenge, support and encourage every student to **achieve their potential**.
- We believe **effort** and **dedication** lead to success and we **raise aspirations**.
- We **personalise our provision** to meet the needs of individuals.
- We enable our students to flourish as **confident learners and leaders** of our community.
- We create a culture where all stakeholders **feel valued, supported and proud**.
- We **work collaboratively** to improve outcomes for our students and support other schools to improve.

## **Policy Statement**

1. The John of Gaunt School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, integrity and accountability. This policy and procedure supports this commitment.
2. Anyone who works for the School in any capacity can raise concerns under this policy. This includes agency workers, volunteers and governors.
3. Relevant trade unions and professional organisations have been consulted about this policy and procedure, and it has their support. If you have any queries about this policy please contact the Headteacher and / or Chair of Governors.

## **Aims**

4. This policy aims to provide you with the framework and support you need to speak up and be confident that you can do so safely. Genuine concerns will always be taken seriously and will be dealt with promptly and fairly.
5. Speaking up about concerns at work is very challenging but extremely important. This policy gives you and others with genuine concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing a way to voice those concerns without fear of victimisation.
6. You may feel worried about raising a concern and this is understandable however you should not be put off. In line with our duty of care towards you and our whole school community, Senior Leaders and our full Board of Governors are committed to an open and honest culture. We will look into the concerns you raise and provide you with the support you need.

## **How will the school treat you?**

7. Often it is those closest to an organisation who realise that there is something wrong. Understandably, you may be reluctant to act upon your concerns because you think you are being disloyal, or because you are afraid of the repercussions if you speak up.
8. We will treat you with respect at all times and thank you for raising concerns. We will discuss your concerns with you so that we understand exactly what your concerns are about.
9. If you make a complaint in good faith but it is not confirmed by the investigation, you will not be at risk of any form of reprisal. However, if you knowingly make malicious allegations, you should be aware that disciplinary action may be taken.
10. We will not tolerate repercussions for anyone who raises a concern in good faith. Such behaviour would be in breach of our values and if this is found to be the case, disciplinary action will be taken against any member of staff who tries to stop another employee from raising a concern or who is responsible for any act of recrimination or victimisation against an employee who raises a concern.

11. Where you may have been party yourself to an act of possible misconduct on which you are now 'blowing the whistle' this could be considered in mitigation. This would not, however, exempt you from disciplinary action.
12. You should not contact the media with concerns about work without first following the steps set out in this policy. Disciplinary action may be taken if this is found to be the case.

### **Existing procedures**

13. There are existing procedures in place (e.g. Grievance and Dignity at Work policies) for you to raise a concern relating to your own employment and this policy is intended to complement those by covering concerns about risk, malpractice or wrongdoing that could be harming the school, including (but not limited to) :
  - Potentially unlawful practices, including financial or fraudulent – such as embezzlement, bribery, corruption, dishonesty, etc
  - Unacceptable standards of practice
  - Improper conduct.
14. Concerns which fall within the scope of specific existing procedures, e.g. child protection or financial irregularities will normally be referred to those procedures.
15. If your concern relates to a potential safeguarding issue you **must** refer directly to the guidance relating to safeguarding to consider firstly whether action needs to be taken in accordance with those processes.
16. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct for staff as adopted by the school.

### **Procedure – How to raise a concern**

17. As with many workplace issues, the easiest way to raise or resolve a concern may be to discuss it with your line manager or relevant SLT lead in the first instance. If this is not possible or is inappropriate, then you can raise your concern with the nominated Governor Pete Gear ([pgear@jogschool.org](mailto:pgear@jogschool.org)), or with any member of the Board of Governors.
18. You do not need to wait for proof – raise the matter as soon as possible. Any person looking in to your concern will consider the relevant evidence available. It doesn't matter if ultimately you have been genuinely mistaken, if in doubt you should speak up.
19. The nominated governor will contact you – wherever possible within 2 working days – to arrange to meet you to discuss your concerns. It would be useful to for you to write down what you believe the problem to be, being as specific as possible including names, dates and places where relevant. If there are any other documents that you think might be helpful, please try to bring these with you. You are invited to bring a colleague or school professional association / union representative with you to the meeting with the governor.

## How we will respond

20. After the initial meeting, the nominated governor will arrange for discreet initial enquiries to be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take.
21. The nominated governor will write to you within 10 days of your initial meeting to acknowledge that your concern has been received; outline our understanding of what the issues are; and let you know how we propose to deal with the matter.
22. If the nominated governor decides that it is appropriate for an investigation to be carried out, this will either be done by them, or by another individual who is asked to investigate – the investigating officer. However, it may sometimes be necessary for a concern to be referred to the police, an external auditor, or for it to be the subject of an independent enquiry.
23. It may be established, through discussion with you that your complaint involves employment issues (e.g. bullying or unlawful discrimination). In this situation, it will be necessary to involve the school's Human Resources Manager, as these will be more appropriately considered under the schools internal procedures. If this is the case it will be discussed with you before it happens.
24. Where an investigation is carried out, you will always be informed of the final outcome. It might not be possible to give you full details of the outcome if it contains personal details of a third party, because we have a duty to protect personal information under the Data Protection Act.
25. You are encouraged to raise your concern openly, or through your union representative on your behalf, because concerns that are raised anonymously are difficult to investigate. However, the school will exercise discretion in deciding whether to investigate an anonymous allegation. When deciding, we will take into account things like the seriousness of the issues raised; the credibility of the allegation; and the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation.
26. The Governing Body will make every effort to protect your identity when you raise a concern if you do not want your name to be disclosed, unless we are required by law to disclose it (for example by the police). It must be appreciated however, that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence.
27. We are continually looking to improve our procedures. Therefore, if you raise a concern, you will be given the opportunity to feed back any issues or problems you may have experienced as a result. The purpose of this is to ensure that employees who have raised concerns in good faith do not suffer as a result and we are able to consider how improvements can be made for the future.