



EDClass Whistleblowing Policy

POL002

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Approved by Cara Batsford

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Policy Statement and Organisational Ethos

EDClass is committed to conducting its operations with absolute integrity, transparency, and accountability. As an accredited online alternative provision provider working with vulnerable learners, pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and children outside mainstream education, creating a culture where staff feel confident to speak up about malpractice, safety concerns, or wrongdoing is vital to institutional safety.

Staff are often the first to realise that there may be serious problems within an educational organisation. This policy provides a clear, confidential framework enabling all workers to raise genuine concerns regarding unlawful conduct, safeguarding failures, financial irregularities, or systematic breaches of policy without fear of victimisation, detriment, or dismissal.

EDClass Limited expects the highest standards of conduct from all learners, staff, partners, associates and volunteers. EDClass will treat seriously any concern that is raised about illegal or improper conduct. All its learners, employees, partners, associates and volunteers are expected to share concerns about any serious impropriety, or breach of procedure with the Senior Management Team without fear of recrimination.

Whistleblowing is distinct from an individual grievance. While grievances relate to an employee's personal employment situation or contract, whistleblowing relates to matters of public interest, child safety, legal non-compliance, or systemic organisational failure.

Statutory and Regulatory Architecture

This policy operates in strict alignment with national employment law, education regulations, and accreditation standards:

- ✓ **The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA):** Incorporating statutory protections under Part IVA of the Employment Rights Act 1996, shielding individuals who make a protected disclosure from dismissal or detrimental treatment.
- ✓ **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026):** Ensuring immediate, unobstructed reporting pathways for concerns regarding adult conduct, failures in child protection referral, suppression of disclosures, or poor safeguarding leadership.
- ✓ **DfE Online Education Accreditation Scheme (OEAS):** Adhering to OEAS Standards 5 requiring auditable leadership integrity and uncompromised reporting avenues.
- ✓ **Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR:** Balancing the necessity of investigating disclosures against the legal obligation to preserve confidentiality and handle sensitive personal data lawfully.

Definition of Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing has been defined as:

‘The disclosure by an employee or professional of confidential information which relates to some danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct connected with the work place, be it of the employee or his/her fellow employees’. (Public Concern at Work Guidelines 1997).

This policy aims to:

- ✓ Give members of staff the confidence to raise concerns about conduct or practice which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical, or which amounts to malpractice, or is inconsistent with group standards and policies so that s/he is encouraged to act on those concerns.
- ✓ Provide members of staff, learners, partners, associates and volunteers with avenues to raise concerns.
- ✓ Ensure that members of staff, learners, partners, associates and volunteers receive a response to the concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken
- ✓ Offer assurance that members of staff, learners, partners, associates and volunteers are protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing action undertaken in good faith

Examples of illegal and/ or improper conduct

- ✓ Unlawful conduct
- ✓ Miscarriages of justice in the conduct of statutory or other processes
- ✓ Failure to comply with a statutory or legal obligation
- ✓ Potential maladministration, misconduct or malpractice
- ✓ Health and safety issues including risks to the public as well as risks to pupils and members of staff
- ✓ Action that has caused or is likely to cause danger to the environment
- ✓ Abuse of authority
- ✓ Unauthorised use of public or other funds
- ✓ Fraud or corruption
- ✓ Breaches of financial regulations or policies
- ✓ Mistreatment of any person
- ✓ Action that has caused, or is likely to cause physical danger to any person or risk serious damage to property
- ✓ Unfair discrimination or favouritism
- ✓ Racist incidents or acts, or racial harassment
- ✓ Any attempt to prevent disclosure of any of the issues listed.

Child protection concerns - All employees and volunteers are expected to report any safeguarding and child protection concerns to the Head of Safeguarding – Kim Light

kim.light@edclass.com or Designated Safeguarding Lead Emma Gladwin
emma@edclass.com.

Such concerns may relate to:

- ✓ The physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect of a child
- ✓ An inappropriate or improper relationship between an adult and a learner.

Anonymous allegations - Allegations can be made anonymously, however, this policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation, as concerns expressed anonymously are often much more difficult to investigate. For example, we may need to contact you to obtain further information or verify the details you have already given us. Anonymous allegations will be considered wherever possible at the discretion of EDClass Ltd. The factors to be taken into account when determining whether an investigation in such a case can proceed would include:

- ✓ The seriousness of the issues raised
- ✓ The credibility of the concern
- ✓ The likelihood of confirming the allegation from other, attributable sources

Harassment or victimisation – EDClass Limited recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal. We will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith. If you feel that you have suffered harassment, either directly or indirectly as a result of raising a concern, you should refer to the EDClass bullying and harassment and policy and code of practice/conduct.

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 – PIDA, is the law that protects whistle-blowers from negative treatment or unfair dismissal. It is part of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (ERA). PIDA makes it unlawful to subject an employee to negative treatment or to dismiss them because they have raised a whistleblowing concern. Raising a whistleblowing concern is also known as a making a '*protected disclosure*'.

Confidentiality - All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of a whistle blower, however, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality, if a whistle blower is required to come forward as a witness.

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 is likely to be taken.

Procedure for Whistleblowing As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager, their line manager or Cara Batsford cara@edclass.com – Senior Safeguarding Advisor, in writing. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. If you feel you cannot express

your concerns within the team, it is open to you to raise your concern with someone outside of EDClass Ltd such as:

- ✓ Rebecca Warnes - 07812158688
- ✓ Designated Officer (previously known as LADO) if the matter is about child protection or safeguarding issues – 01709 823 914
- ✓ PROTECT helpline 020 3117 2520
- ✓ Police
- ✓ Health & Safety Executive
- ✓ Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- ✓ Department for Education
- ✓ OFSTED

What happens next

The appointed person dealing with your concern will:

- ✓ Provide a written response acknowledging receipt of the concern and notifying what will happen next (unless it was an anonymous allegation)
- ✓ Look into the allegation - seeking evidence and interviewing witnesses as necessary.
- ✓ Maintain confidentiality wherever possible but be mindful that there is no guarantee that the whistle blower can remain anonymous.
- ✓ If appropriate, for concerns of criminal behaviour refer the matter to the Police.
- ✓ If appropriate, for concerns of child protection, refer the matter to the Local Authority officer designated to lead on child protection/local authority social services designated manager for child protection. The whistleblowing process will be halted until the statutory authorities have completed their investigations and confirmed that it is appropriate to continue with the whistleblowing process.

If the person investigating the allegation needs to talk to you, you are permitted to be accompanied by a trade union or professional association representative or a fellow member of staff not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

The target is to complete the inquiry within 5 working days from the date of the initial written response and write to all relevant parties to keep them informed of what is happening (if appropriate).

Qualifying Disclosures

This policy applies to all individuals performing duties on behalf of EDClass, including permanent and fixed-term employees, supply educators, academic mentors, pastoral officers, technical engineers, software developers, agency staff, contractors, and volunteers.

A "qualifying disclosure" means any disclosure of information that, in the reasonable belief of the worker, is made in the public interest and shows that one or more of the following has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur:

Category of Concern	Educational and Remote AP Operational Examples
Child Protection and Safeguarding Failures	Suppression or deliberate concealment of a learner's abuse disclosure; failure to refer an allegation to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO); ignoring self-harm or sexual violence alerts.
Platform Monitoring and System Tampering	Deliberately disabling automated keyword filters; bypassing monitoring engines; altering, deleting, or failing to archive recorded lessons, chat logs, or timestamped student records.
Criminal Offences	Fraud, bribery, theft, child sexual exploitation/abuse material possession, digital forgery of compliance data, or intentional falsification of identity credentials.
Breaches of Legal and Statutory Obligations	Systemic failure to deliver mandatory Section F provisions outlined in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs); non-compliance with the Equality Act 2010; serious breaches of the Prevent Duty.
Health, Safety and Pupil Well-being Dangers	Operating digital services with critical technical flaws that expose children to unmoderated communication, cyberbullying, or predatory contact; failure to follow fire or workplace health standards in physical hubs.
Data Protection and Privacy Violations	Deliberate exfiltration, sale, or unencrypted transmission of confidential pupil data, safeguarding registers, or sensitive medical histories.
Deliberate Concealment of the Above	Systemic leadership instruction to cover up, withhold, or destroy evidence relating to any of the above categories.

Whistle blower Protections and Safeguards

EDClass will not tolerate any harassment, victimisation, or detrimental treatment of any worker who raises a legitimate concern under this policy.

CORE PROTECTIONS UNDER THIS POLICY

- ✓ **STATUTORY IMMUNITY:** Protection against unfair dismissal, detriment, demotion, or disciplinary sanction under the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA).
- ✓ **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Identity will not be revealed without consent unless required by law or judicial process.
- ✓ **REASONABLE BELIEF:** Protection applies even if the concern proves mistaken, provided it was raised in good faith.
- ✓ **ANONYMOUS REPORTING:** Anonymous concerns are reviewed and investigated based on the severity and evidence available.

Protection from Detriment

Any member of staff who victimises, bullies, penalises, or harasses a whistle blower will be subject to immediate disciplinary investigation under EDClass's disciplinary policy, which may result in summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

Confidentiality vs. Anonymity

- ✓ **Confidential Disclosures:** Whistle blowers are encouraged to provide their name and contact details when raising concerns. Every effort will be made to protect their identity throughout the process. If circumstances arise where the investigation cannot proceed without disclosing the whistle blower's identity (such as requiring evidence in criminal proceedings), this will be discussed with the individual first.
- ✓ **Anonymous Disclosures:** While anonymous disclosures are accepted and investigated wherever possible, they present practical limitations in gathering follow-up evidence, confirming context, and providing direct protective assurances or outcome updates to the whistle blower.

Malicious or Vexatious Allegations

If an investigation establishes that a worker raised an allegation maliciously, knowing it to be entirely untrue, or for personal malice, that individual will be subject to disciplinary procedures. However, no action will be taken against any employee who raises a genuine concern in good faith that is subsequently found to be mistaken.

External Escalation and Prescribed Bodies

If an internal investigation yields an inadequate response, if an individual has reasonable grounds to believe that senior leadership and the Board of Directors are complicit in the wrongdoing, or where there is an urgent risk to child safety, staff may escalate concerns directly to recognised external prescribed bodies:

EXTERNAL PRESCRIBED BODIES (UK)

- ✓ **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line:** Dedicated national hotline for reporting safeguarding failures in education settings.
 - ✓ *Contact:* Tel: 0800 028 0285 | help@nspcc.org.uk

- ✓ **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** Statutory oversight of allegations against adults working with children in the local authority area where the child resides/learns.
- ✓ **Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline:** Regulatory oversight of alternative education quality, governance, and institutional safety.
 - ✓ *Contact:* Tel: 0300 123 3155 | wteam@ofsted.gov.uk
- ✓ **Department for Education (DfE) OEAS Accreditation Team:** Online Education Accreditation Scheme (OEAS) standards compliance and provider integrity.
 - ✓ *Contact:* Email: online.education@education.gov.uk
- ✓ **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):** Unlawful processing, intentional data leaks, or deliberate concealment of data breaches.
 - ✓ *Contact:* Tel: 0303 123 1113 | ico.org.uk
- ✓ **Protect (Independent Charity):** Free, confidential, independent legal advice on how to whistle blow safely and lawfully.
 - ✓ *Contact:* Tel: 020 3117 2520 | protect-advice.org.uk

Child Protection Safeguarding Whistleblowing Mandate

In full compliance with KCSIE 2026, EDClass maintains a zero-tolerance approach to the suppression of child protection matters:

- ✓ **Duty to Escalate:** If any member of staff identifies that a colleague, manager, or leader has failed to refer an active child protection concern to the home school DSL, social care, or the police, the employee is professionally and ethically mandated to escalate the matter immediately to the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line or the relevant local authority LADO.
- ✓ **Overriding Child Safety Threshold:** No non-disclosure agreement (NDA), settlement agreement, employment contract, or internal confidentiality policy can legally restrict a worker from reporting child abuse, child sexual exploitation, institutional neglect, or imminent danger to young people to statutory child protection authorities.

Governance, Oversight, and Record Keeping

To ensure regulatory oversight without compromising personal confidentiality:

- ✓ **The Whistleblowing Register:** A secure, encrypted record of all formal whistleblowing disclosures is maintained by the Head of Safeguarding and the Governance Director. This log tracks the nature of each disclosure, the Investigating Officer assigned, actions taken, timeframes, and outcomes.
- ✓ **Annual Review to the Board:** The Board of Directors receives an annual, anonymised report summarising all whistleblowing concerns, identifying underlying trends, and reviewing systemic policy or infrastructural adaptations implemented as a result.
- ✓ **Audit Trail Security:** In line with OEAS accreditation criteria, all electronic records, system notes, and evidence files associated with whistleblowing investigations are preserved within secure UK data repositories with restricted access permissions.

Policy Integration and Document Control

This Whistleblowing Policy operates in direct conjunction with the following EDClass operational policies:

- ✓ Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- ✓ Staff Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use Policy
- ✓ E-Safety, Filtering, and Monitoring Policy
- ✓ Data Protection, Information Security, and DPIA Policy
- ✓ Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- ✓ Formal Complaints Policy

Policy Review

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