



Orange Tree School

Speaking Up (Whistleblowing) Policy

OTS Oakleigh Pk and Ridgeway Sites

This policy supports compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, particularly:

- Part 3 – Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils, including Paragraphs 7 and 16; and
- Part 8 – Quality of Leadership in and Management of Schools, including Paragraph 34.



DOCUMENT DETAILS	
Applies To:	• All Staff • External suppliers or visitors • Regulatory / Legal bodies • Other (e.g. Parents) • Hospital Staff
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Policy at a Glance

Purpose

This policy explains how to raise concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practice or misconduct that may affect children, colleagues, the school or the wider public interest. It encourages everyone working for or on behalf of Orange Tree School to speak up with confidence, knowing that genuine concerns will be taken seriously and managed fairly.

Who Does This Policy Apply To?

This policy applies to everyone working for or on behalf of Orange Tree School, including employees, volunteers, agency staff, contractors, consultants, students on placement and members of the Advisory Board.

Your Responsibilities

Everyone working for or on behalf of the school is expected to:

- speak up if something doesn't feel right;
- report concerns promptly using the appropriate reporting route;
- cooperate with enquiries where required;
- maintain confidentiality; and
- help create a culture of openness, integrity and safeguarding.

Remember

- You do not need proof before raising a concern.
- You are not expected to investigate concerns yourself.
- Genuine concerns raised in good faith will be taken seriously.
- Safeguarding concerns must always be reported immediately.
- It is always better to raise a genuine concern than remain silent.

If You're Unsure

If you are uncertain whether a concern should be raised under this policy, seek advice from:

- your Line Manager;
- HR/Business Manager;
- the DSL or a DDSL;
- the Headteacher;
- the Chair of the Advisory Board;
- the Proprietor; or
- the Independent Speak Up Advisor.

Seeking advice should never delay action where a child may be at risk of harm.

Our Commitment

Orange Tree School is committed to creating a culture where speaking up is welcomed, concerns are managed fairly and respectfully, and learning from concerns strengthens safeguarding, professional practice and public trust.

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1. Introduction

Orange Tree School is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, openness, accountability and safeguarding. We believe that creating a culture in which staff feel confident to speak up when something does not feel right is fundamental to protecting children, supporting colleagues and maintaining public confidence in the school.

Speaking up about concerns is a positive professional responsibility. Staff, volunteers and others working on behalf of the school are often the first to identify situations where poor practice, unsafe behaviour, misconduct or safeguarding failures may be occurring. Raising concerns promptly allows issues to be addressed at the earliest opportunity, reduces the risk of harm and supports continuous improvement.

Orange Tree School is committed to ensuring that anyone who raises a genuine concern in good faith is listened to, treated fairly and protected from victimisation or other detriment. Concerns will be considered objectively, handled sensitively and managed in accordance with this policy, relevant legislation and statutory safeguarding guidance.

This policy supports a culture of openness, professional curiosity, respectful challenge and psychological safety. Orange Tree School recognises that staff are more likely to raise concerns where they feel safe, listened to and supported. Speaking up should never be viewed as disloyalty or criticism of colleagues. Instead, it demonstrates a shared commitment to safeguarding children, maintaining professional standards and living the school's values. The Independent Speak Up Adviser forms part of this commitment by providing an additional confidential and impartial source of professional support.

Nothing in this policy replaces a member of staff's statutory safeguarding responsibilities. Where concerns relate to the immediate safety or welfare of a child, staff must act without delay in accordance with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and relevant statutory guidance.

This policy has been developed with regard to relevant employment legislation, statutory safeguarding guidance and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

2. How to Use This Policy

This policy is intended to support staff in recognising, raising and responding appropriately to concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practice or conduct that may place children, colleagues, the school or the public interest at risk.

Speaking up is an important part of maintaining a safe, open and accountable culture. Staff are encouraged to use this policy whenever they are concerned that something may be wrong, even if they are unsure whether the matter meets the legal definition of whistleblowing.

This policy should be used to:

- understand when concerns should be raised;
- identify the most appropriate reporting route;
- seek advice where there is uncertainty;
- promote openness, accountability and professional integrity; and
- reinforce Orange Tree School's commitment to safeguarding and ethical practice.

This policy should be read alongside the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Low-Level Concerns and Professional Boundaries Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Complaints Policy and relevant employment policies.

Where uncertainty exists, staff should seek advice from the Headteacher, the lead teacher for Ridgeway, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), a member of the Senior Leadership Team or another appropriate senior colleague.

3. Statement of Intent

Orange Tree School is committed to fostering a culture of openness, honesty, accountability and professional respect in which the welfare of children is paramount.

The school recognises that maintaining a safe and effective learning environment depends upon everyone feeling confident to speak up when they have concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practice, misconduct or behaviour that may place children, colleagues, the school or the public interest at risk. Raising concerns at an early stage helps prevent harm, strengthens safeguarding and supports continuous improvement.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that concerns are identified, reported and managed fairly, promptly and proportionately. It provides a clear framework for raising concerns in good faith and explains how the school will respond whilst protecting those who speak up appropriately.

Orange Tree School encourages all staff, volunteers, contractors and others working on behalf of the school to raise concerns whenever they believe that something is wrong or has the

potential to cause harm. Speaking up is viewed as a positive professional responsibility and an important contribution to maintaining a safe, ethical and accountable organisation. Staff should never feel that raising a genuine concern is disloyal or that it will automatically result in conflict or negative consequences.

The school is committed to responding to concerns objectively, maintaining confidentiality wherever possible and ensuring that individuals who raise concerns in good faith are treated fairly and protected from victimisation, harassment or other forms of detriment.

Orange Tree School recognises that safeguarding is strengthened through professional curiosity, respectful challenge and a willingness to question practice where something does not feel right. Staff are encouraged to seek advice whenever they are uncertain about how or where to raise a concern rather than remaining silent or making assumptions.

Where concerns identify opportunities to improve practice, strengthen procedures or enhance safeguarding arrangements, the school will seek to learn from them. Speaking up is not simply about identifying wrongdoing; it is about protecting children, supporting colleagues and continually improving the quality and safety of the school's provision across both the main School site and the Ridgeway Hospital provision.

Through this policy, Orange Tree School seeks to promote a culture in which concerns are raised with confidence, managed with integrity and used constructively to strengthen safeguarding, professional standards and public trust.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals working for or on behalf of Orange Tree School across both the main School site and the Ridgeway Hospital provision, regardless of their role, employment status or length of service.

This includes:

- employees;
- the Headteacher;
- members of the Advisory Board;
- agency and supply staff;
- volunteers;
- contractors;
- consultants;
- apprentices;
- trainees and students on placement;
- peripatetic staff;
- external professionals working with pupils;
- visitors undertaking regulated activity; and
- any other individual working on behalf of the school.

Everyone working within or on behalf of the school has a responsibility to act with honesty, integrity and professionalism, and to raise concerns where they believe that wrongdoing, unsafe practice, misconduct or failures in safeguarding, governance or legal compliance may have occurred.

This policy applies to concerns arising in connection with the school's activities, including conduct within the workplace, during educational visits, off-site activities, online interactions undertaken as part of School business and any conduct outside work that may affect the safety of children, the reputation of the school or an individual's suitability to work with children.

This policy applies where concerns are raised in the public interest. It is not intended to replace procedures for dealing with personal employment matters, such as grievances, bullying, harassment or disciplinary issues, which should be addressed through the appropriate School policies and procedures.

Nothing in this policy prevents staff from fulfilling their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. Where concerns relate to the immediate safety or welfare of a child, staff must act without delay in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

5. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Employment Rights Act 1996;
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA);
- Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2026);
- Working Together to Safeguard Children;
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended);
- The Children Act 1989;
- The Children Act 2004;
- The Education Act 2002;
- The Equality Act 2010;
- The Human Rights Act 1998;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR); and
- Teachers' Standards (DfE).

The school recognises that whistleblowing disclosures may relate to safeguarding, health and safety, financial management, regulatory compliance or other matters affecting the public interest. Where concerns relate to safeguarding children, the procedures set out in the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and relevant statutory guidance will always take precedence.

Nothing in this policy limits or removes an individual's statutory rights under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 or their legal responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

6. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Speaking Up

Speaking up is the act of raising a genuine concern about wrongdoing, unsafe practice, misconduct or behaviour that may place children, colleagues, the school or the wider public interest at risk.

At Orange Tree School, speaking up is viewed as a positive professional responsibility and an important part of maintaining a safe, open and accountable culture.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which an individual reasonably believes shows that wrongdoing has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur, and where the concern is raised in the public interest.

Whistleblowing concerns relate to matters that affect others or the wider public, rather than personal employment issues.

Protected Disclosure

A protected disclosure is a whistleblowing disclosure that meets the legal requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA).

Individuals who make a protected disclosure in accordance with the law are entitled to protection from dismissal or detriment because they have raised the concern.

Public Interest

A concern is raised in the public interest where it relates to wrongdoing or risks that could affect children, colleagues, the school or the wider community, rather than solely an individual's personal employment circumstances.

Good Faith

A concern is raised in good faith where the individual genuinely believes that the information they are sharing is true or indicates a risk that should be investigated.

A concern raised in good faith will not be treated adversely simply because it is not ultimately substantiated.

Detriment

Detriment means any unfair treatment suffered because an individual has raised a genuine concern.

This may include victimisation, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, disadvantage, or any other treatment intended to discourage or penalise someone for speaking up.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs where an individual is treated less favourably because they have raised, or intend to raise, a genuine concern under this policy.

Orange Tree School will not tolerate victimisation of any person who speaks up in good faith.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality means that information relating to a concern will only be shared with those who have a legitimate professional need to know in order to assess, investigate or respond appropriately.

Whilst the School will make every reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality, there may be circumstances where information must be shared to safeguard children, comply with legal obligations or facilitate an investigation.

Safeguarding Concern

A safeguarding concern is any concern that a child has been harmed, may be at risk of harm, or that an adult's behaviour may present a risk to children.

Safeguarding concerns must always be acted upon immediately in accordance with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and relevant statutory guidance.

Grievance

A grievance is a concern relating to an individual's own employment, working conditions, treatment at work or contractual matters.

Personal employment concerns should normally be managed through the School's Grievance Policy rather than this policy, unless they also involve matters of wider public interest or safeguarding.

7. When Should You Speak Up?

Orange Tree School encourages staff to speak up whenever they have a genuine concern that wrongdoing, unsafe practice or misconduct may be placing children, colleagues, the school or the wider public interest at risk.

You do not need proof that wrongdoing has occurred before raising a concern. If you reasonably believe that something is wrong, or has the potential to cause harm, you should report it promptly so that it can be considered appropriately.

Speaking up is appropriate where concerns relate to matters such as:

- safeguarding failures or practices that place children at risk;
- abuse, neglect or the mistreatment of a child;
- conduct by a member of staff, volunteer, contractor or leader that may place children at risk;
- criminal offences or unlawful conduct;
- breaches of statutory guidance or legal obligations;
- serious breaches of School policies or professional standards;
- health and safety risks;
- financial misconduct, fraud or misuse of School funds;
- bribery, corruption or conflicts of interest;
- deliberate concealment of wrongdoing; or
- any practice that may seriously damage public confidence in the school or compromise the safety and wellbeing of others.

Staff are not expected to investigate concerns themselves. Their responsibility is to recognise concerns, report them promptly and cooperate honestly with any subsequent enquiries.

Where there is uncertainty about whether a concern should be raised under this policy, staff should seek advice from the Headteacher, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), a member of the Senior Leadership Team or another appropriate senior colleague. It is always better to seek advice than to remain silent.

Speaking Up or Another Procedure?

Not every concern is a whistleblowing matter.

The table below provides guidance on which procedure is likely to be most appropriate.

If your concern is about...	You should usually refer to...
A child who may be at risk of harm	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
A colleague's professional conduct or boundaries	Low-Level Concerns and Professional Boundaries Policy
Your own employment, pay, workload or	Grievance Policy

treatment at work	
Serious wrongdoing, unlawful practice, safeguarding failures or risks affecting others or the public interest	Speaking Up (Whistleblowing) Policy

Where a concern could fall under more than one procedure, advice should be sought at the earliest opportunity. The school will ensure that concerns are managed under the most appropriate process.

8. How to Raise a Concern

Orange Tree School encourages individuals to raise concerns as soon as possible after becoming aware of an issue. Concerns are often easier to understand and address when they are reported promptly, and early reporting can help prevent harm, reduce risk and support timely intervention.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Individuals should provide as much factual information as possible, including:

- what happened or what is believed to have happened;
- who was involved;
- when and where the incident or concern arose;
- whether anyone else witnessed or may have relevant information;
- any action already taken; and
- any immediate risks that require urgent attention.

Individuals are not expected to investigate concerns themselves or gather evidence before reporting them. Their responsibility is to report what they have seen, heard or reasonably believe to be true, allowing the School to determine the most appropriate course of action.

Reporting Routes

Normal Reporting Pathway

Orange Tree School encourages concerns to be raised at the most appropriate level so that they can be resolved promptly, fairly and effectively. In most cases, concerns should follow the reporting pathway below unless there is a good reason to use an alternative reporting route.

Step 1 – Line Manager

Wherever appropriate, concerns should first be raised with the individual's Line Manager.

Step 2 – Senior Leadership

If the concern cannot be resolved by the Line Manager, involves the Line Manager, or the individual feels unable to raise it with them, the concern should be raised with an appropriate senior leader, for example:

- Headteacher
- HR/Business Manager
- Lead Teacher (Ridgeway)
- DSL or DDSL
- Senior Leadership Team

Step 3 – Governance

Concerns should normally be escalated to the Chair of the Advisory Board or the Proprietor only where:

- the concern involves the Headteacher or senior leadership;
- previous reporting has not addressed the concern appropriately;
- governance oversight is required; or
- there is another legitimate reason why internal management routes are inappropriate.

Safeguarding Reporting Routes

Concern	Report to
A child who may be at risk of harm	DSL/DDSL immediately
A concern about a member of staff's conduct towards a child	DSL immediately
A concern about the DSL	Headteacher and/or LADO in accordance with safeguarding procedures
A concern about the Headteacher	Chair of the Advisory Board / Proprietor and LADO where appropriate

Whilst concerns will normally be raised with an individual's line manager in the first instance, there is no requirement to follow a staged reporting process where this would be inappropriate. Individuals should report concerns directly to the person best placed to deal with them.

Where a concern relates to the safety or welfare of a child, staff must follow the procedures set out in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy without delay.

Where an individual is unsure who to approach, they are encouraged to seek advice from an appropriate senior colleague. Seeking advice about the correct reporting route should never delay the reporting of an urgent safeguarding concern.

Anonymous Concerns

The school recognises that there may be circumstances in which an individual wishes to raise a concern anonymously.

Anonymous concerns will be considered where sufficient information has been provided to enable the matter to be assessed. However, anonymity can make it more difficult to

investigate concerns fully, seek clarification or provide feedback to the individual raising the concern.

Wherever possible, individuals are encouraged to identify themselves so that appropriate support can be provided and the concern can be investigated effectively.

9. How the School Will Respond to Concerns

The way in which Orange Tree School responds to concerns is fundamental to maintaining trust and confidence in the speaking up process. Everyone who raises a genuine concern should feel assured that it will be taken seriously, considered objectively and managed fairly.

The school will acknowledge receipt of concerns as soon as reasonably practicable and will keep individuals appropriately informed of progress, subject to legal, safeguarding and confidentiality considerations.

All concerns raised under this policy will be assessed promptly to determine:

- the nature of the concern;
- whether immediate action is required to protect a child or another individual;
- whether the concern should be managed under this policy or another School procedure;
- whether statutory agencies or external bodies should be informed; and
- the most appropriate person to manage or investigate the concern.

Where a concern relates to safeguarding or indicates that a child may be at risk of harm, safeguarding procedures will take immediate precedence in accordance with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The school's response will always seek to be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the concern. Depending on the circumstances, this may include:

- seeking further information or clarification;
- undertaking preliminary enquiries;
- initiating a formal investigation;
- referring the matter through safeguarding procedures;
- reporting concerns to external agencies or regulatory bodies where required; or
- taking appropriate management, disciplinary or governance action.

Individuals who raise concerns in good faith will receive acknowledgement that their concern has been received and, where appropriate, information about how it will be managed. Once the matter has been considered, the school will provide the individual with appropriate feedback about the outcome and any action proposed or taken, so far as it is lawful and appropriate to do so. Where the School is unable to provide particular information because of safeguarding, legal, confidentiality, data protection or employment considerations, this will be explained to the individual wherever possible.

The school recognises that raising concerns can be difficult and may cause anxiety. Wherever appropriate, individuals who speak up will be offered appropriate support throughout the process.

All concerns will be handled with professionalism, sensitivity and respect. Decisions will be evidence-informed, impartial and consistent with the principles of natural justice. No assumptions will be made before enquiries have been completed, and the rights and welfare of everyone involved will be considered throughout the process.

Where investigations identify opportunities to improve safeguarding, governance, policies, procedures or professional practice, the school will use these findings constructively to strengthen its culture of openness, accountability and continuous improvement.

10. Confidentiality, Protection and Support

Orange Tree School recognises that raising a concern can be difficult. Individuals may worry about the impact on professional relationships, the possibility of repercussions or whether their concern will be taken seriously. The school is committed to creating an environment in which individuals feel safe, supported and confident to speak up.

Confidentiality

The school will make every reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality when a concern is raised. Information will only be shared with those who have a legitimate professional need to know in order to assess, investigate or respond appropriately.

There may, however, be circumstances where confidentiality cannot be maintained. This may include situations where:

- there is a legal obligation to disclose information;
- safeguarding concerns require information to be shared to protect a child or vulnerable person;
- external agencies become involved in an investigation; or
- disclosure is necessary to ensure a fair and lawful investigation.

Where it is necessary to disclose an individual's identity, the school will seek to discuss this with them wherever it is appropriate and safe to do so.

Protection from Detriment

No individual who raises a genuine concern in good faith will suffer dismissal, victimisation, harassment, discrimination or any other form of detriment because they have spoken up.

Any attempt to disadvantage, intimidate or victimise an individual for raising a genuine concern will be treated seriously and may result in disciplinary action.

This protection applies regardless of whether the concern is ultimately substantiated, provided it was raised honestly and with a reasonable belief that it was in the public interest.

Malicious or Knowingly False Allegations

Orange Tree School expects all concerns to be raised honestly and responsibly.

Concerns that are deliberately false, malicious, frivolous or raised with the intention of causing harm or misleading others are not protected under this policy and may result in disciplinary or other appropriate action.

The fact that a concern is not upheld following investigation will not, in itself, indicate that it was raised maliciously.

Support for Individuals

The school recognises that both raising and responding to concerns can be stressful.

Where appropriate, the school will seek to provide reasonable support to individuals involved in the process, including those who raise concerns and those who are the subject of concerns, whilst ensuring that safeguarding, confidentiality and the integrity of any investigation are maintained.

All individuals involved will be treated with dignity, fairness and respect throughout the process.

11. External Reporting

Orange Tree School encourages concerns to be raised internally in the first instance wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so. This gives the school the best opportunity to investigate concerns promptly, safeguard children and resolve issues effectively. However, the School recognises that there may be circumstances where an individual reasonably believes that an internal report is not appropriate or that concerns have not been addressed adequately.

Individuals have the right to make a protected disclosure to an appropriate external body where this is permitted by law.

Examples of circumstances in which external reporting may be appropriate include:

- where an individual reasonably believes they may be subjected to detriment or victimisation if they report the concern internally;
- where there is reason to believe that evidence may be concealed or destroyed;
- where the concern has previously been raised internally but has not been addressed appropriately;

- where the concern involves the most senior leaders or governance arrangements and cannot reasonably be managed internally; or
- where legislation or statutory guidance requires direct referral to an external agency.

Depending on the nature of the concern, appropriate external bodies may include:

- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- Children's Social Care;
- the Police;
- the Health and Safety Executive (HSE);
- the Education and Skills Funding Agency (where applicable);
- the Charity Commission (where applicable);
- the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO);
- the Department for Education; or
- any other prescribed person or regulatory body identified under whistleblowing legislation.

Where safeguarding concerns relate to the safety or welfare of a child, staff must continue to follow the procedures set out in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The immediate protection of children must always take precedence over internal reporting arrangements.

Nothing in this policy prevents an individual from exercising their statutory rights under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Individuals are encouraged to seek advice before making an external disclosure where this is appropriate and safe to do so. However, seeking advice must never delay action where there is an immediate safeguarding risk or another urgent matter requiring external intervention.

Independent Speak Up Adviser

Orange Tree School has appointed an Independent Speak Up Adviser to provide staff with access to an impartial professional who is independent of the school's leadership, management and governance arrangements.

The Independent Speak Up Adviser is a self-employed education professional contracted by the school to provide independent professional supervision for staff and an additional confidential route for discussing concerns. Whilst contracted by the School, the Adviser is not involved in the day-to-day management, operational leadership or governance of Orange Tree School. This independence enables staff to seek advice and discuss concerns with confidence where they may feel uncomfortable using the school's normal reporting routes.

The Adviser can provide confidential guidance, help individuals understand the available reporting options and, where appropriate and with the individual's agreement, support them in communicating concerns through the appropriate channels. The Adviser does not investigate concerns, make safeguarding decisions or replace the school's statutory safeguarding, whistleblowing or complaints procedures. Where an immediate safeguarding concern or evidence of unlawful activity is identified, the Adviser will encourage and, where

appropriate, facilitate prompt reporting through the appropriate safeguarding or regulatory channels.

Contact details for the independent Speak Up Advisor are provided at the end of this policy, together with details of other relevant external agencies and prescribed bodies.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

Creating and maintaining a culture in which individuals feel confident to speak up is a shared responsibility. Everyone working for or on behalf of Orange Tree School has a role in promoting openness, safeguarding children and maintaining the highest standards of integrity and professional conduct.

All Staff and Others Working on Behalf of the School

All individuals working for or on behalf of the school are expected to:

- act with honesty, integrity and professionalism;
- remain vigilant to concerns that may affect children, colleagues, the school or the wider public interest;
- raise concerns promptly and in accordance with this policy;
- cooperate fully with any enquiries or investigations;
- maintain confidentiality where appropriate; and
- contribute to a culture in which speaking up is encouraged, respected and valued.

No individual should ignore concerns because they believe someone else will report them.

The HR/Business Manager

The HR/Business Manager is responsible for:

- providing advice on employment matters associated with concerns raised under this policy;
- supporting fair and consistent processes;
- ensuring employment procedures are followed where concerns progress to formal investigation or disciplinary action;
- maintaining appropriate records in accordance with employment and data protection requirements; and
- working collaboratively with the Headteacher and other senior leaders to ensure concerns are managed lawfully, fairly and proportionately.

Line Managers

Line managers are responsible for:

- fostering an environment in which staff feel able to raise concerns without fear;

- listening carefully and responding appropriately when concerns are raised;
- ensuring concerns are acted upon promptly or referred to the appropriate person;
- maintaining appropriate confidentiality; and
- seeking advice where necessary to ensure concerns are managed appropriately.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs)

The DSL and DDSLs are responsible for:

- ensuring safeguarding concerns are managed in accordance with statutory guidance and the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- providing advice where concerns involve safeguarding or professional conduct;
- liaising with external safeguarding agencies where appropriate; and
- contributing to organisational learning arising from safeguarding-related concerns.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- promoting a culture of openness, accountability and psychological safety;
- ensuring this policy is implemented effectively across both School sites;
- ensuring concerns are managed fairly, promptly and proportionately;
- ensuring appropriate investigations are undertaken where required;
- ensuring appropriate action is taken following investigations; and
- reporting significant concerns and emerging themes to the Proprietor and Advisory Board, where appropriate.

The Chair of the Advisory Board

The Chair of the Advisory Board is responsible for:

- receiving concerns where they relate to the Headteacher or where governance oversight is required;
- ensuring concerns involving senior leaders are managed independently, fairly and transparently;
- providing appropriate oversight of significant whistleblowing matters; and
- supporting a culture of openness, integrity and accountability.

The Proprietor

The Proprietor is responsible for:

- ensuring appropriate governance arrangements are in place to support effective whistleblowing arrangements;
- monitoring the effectiveness of this policy;
- ensuring significant concerns are addressed appropriately;
- seeking assurance that individuals are able to speak up safely;

- promoting continuous improvement in safeguarding, governance and organisational culture; and
- reviewing themes and learning arising from concerns to strengthen practice across the school.

Where responsibilities assigned within this policy are held by the same individual, that individual will discharge each responsibility in accordance with the relevant governance role and, where appropriate, seek independent advice or oversight to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

13. Recording, Monitoring and Learning

Orange Tree School is committed to learning from concerns raised under this policy in order to strengthen safeguarding, governance and organisational practice.

Appropriate records will be maintained of concerns raised under this policy, including:

- the nature of the concern;
- when and how the concern was raised;
- actions taken in response;
- the outcome of any enquiries or investigations; and
- any recommendations or learning identified.

Records will be maintained securely and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR, the School's Data Protection Policy and applicable record retention requirements.

Information relating to concerns will be shared only with those who have a legitimate professional need to know and will be handled in accordance with the principles of confidentiality set out in this policy.

The Headteacher will ensure that significant concerns, emerging themes and organisational learning are reported to the Proprietor and Advisory Board, where appropriate, whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

The school will periodically review concerns raised under this policy to identify:

- recurring issues or patterns;
- safeguarding themes;
- professional conduct issues;
- procedural weaknesses;
- training needs;
- opportunities to strengthen policies and procedures; and
- wider organisational learning.

Learning arising from concerns will be used constructively to improve safeguarding arrangements, strengthen professional practice and promote a culture of openness, accountability and continuous improvement.

The school recognises that the effectiveness of a speaking up culture is measured not only by the concerns that are raised, but by how those concerns are used to improve practice and protect children.

14. Monitoring and Review

Orange Tree School is committed to ensuring that this policy remains effective, reflects current legislation and statutory guidance, and continues to promote a culture in which individuals feel confident to speak up.

The Headteacher is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day implementation of this policy and ensuring that appropriate procedures are followed when concerns are raised.

The Proprietor, with oversight from the Advisory Board, will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- review of significant whistleblowing concerns and outcomes, where appropriate;
- consideration of emerging themes, trends and organisational learning;
- monitoring compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements;
- evaluation of staff confidence in raising concerns, where appropriate; and
- review of training, guidance and awareness relating to speaking up.

This policy will be formally reviewed annually, or sooner where required to reflect:

- changes in legislation or statutory guidance;
- changes to governance arrangements;
- learning arising from safeguarding reviews, investigations or audits;
- organisational changes; or
- lessons identified through the operation of this policy.

Minor amendments, such as changes to contact details or job titles, may be made outside the formal review cycle where these do not alter the intent or operation of the policy.

15. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following School policies and procedures:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Low-Level Concerns and Professional Boundaries Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Grievance Policy;

- Disciplinary Policy;
- Complaints Policy;
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Recruitment and Selection Policy;
- Data Protection Policy;
- Online Safety Policy (where applicable); and
- Relationship and Behaviour and Physical Intervention policies, where relevant.

Where there is any uncertainty about which policy applies, advice should be sought from the Headteacher, DSL or another appropriate senior leader.

16. Our Commitment

Orange Tree School believes that an open and honest culture is fundamental to safeguarding children, maintaining public trust and supporting professional integrity.

Speaking up is not simply about reporting wrongdoing. It is about protecting children, supporting colleagues, strengthening professional practice and ensuring that concerns are addressed before harm occurs.

The school is committed to ensuring that every individual working for or on behalf of Orange Tree School feels able to raise genuine concerns with confidence, knowing that they will be listened to, treated fairly and responded to appropriately.

By encouraging openness, respectful challenge and professional curiosity, Orange Tree School seeks to create an environment in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and continuous improvement is embedded within everyday practice.

Together, we will continue to build a culture where concerns are raised early, managed with integrity and used constructively to strengthen the safety, wellbeing and education of every child in our care.

Appendix A – Key Contacts

The following contacts are available to provide advice, receive concerns or offer support in relation to this policy.

Role	Name	Contact Details
Headteacher	Zoe Ramshaw	Zoe.ramshaw@orangetreeschool.org
The HR/Business Manager	Helen Carmel	hr@orangetreeschool.org
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Hayley Hunter (OTS) Barbara Maleki (Ridgeway)	dsl@orangetreeschool.org Barbara.maleki@ellernmede.org
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) (DDSLs)	Lucy Price Evie Waldren Jake Beeson Sanchia Simon	dsl@orangetreeschool.org Sanchia.simon@ellernmede.org
Chair of the Advisory Board	Peter Curtis	Peter.curtis@orangetreeschool.org

Proprietor	Peter Curtis	Peter.curtis@orangetreeschool.org
Independent Speak Up Advisor	Jane Reason	voice@orangetreeschool.org
Line Manager (where applicable)		

Independent Speak Up Adviser

Jane Reason

Self-employed Independent Professional Supervisor (contracted by Orange Tree School)

Jane is a former Headteacher and Deputy CEO of a specialist education trust, with over 28 years' experience across mainstream and specialist education, including leadership of SEMH and complex needs provision. She is also an experienced professional coach with a particular interest in inclusion, relational practice and staff development.

As Independent Speak Up Adviser, Jane provides independent professional supervision for staff and a confidential opportunity to discuss concerns. She is independent of the School's leadership and governance arrangements and does not investigate concerns or replace statutory safeguarding or whistleblowing procedures.

Email: voice@orangetreeschool.org

External Advice and Prescribed Bodies

Organisation	Contact Details	When would staff use this?
Barnet Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	lado@barnet.gov.uk	Allegations about adults working with children.
Children's Social Care (Barnet MASH)	Tel: 020 8359 4066 (Mon–Fri) Emergency Duty Team (out of hours): 020 8359 2000	Immediate safeguarding concerns relating to children.
Police	Emergency: 999 non-emergency: 101	Criminal offences or immediate risk.
NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line	Tel: 0800 028 0285 Email: help@nspcc.org.uk	Independent advice about child protection concerns and whistleblowing.
Protect (Independent Whistleblowing Charity)	Advice Line: 020 3117 2520 Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk	Independent confidential advice before raising a concern.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)	Tel: 0300 003 1647 Website: www.hse.gov.uk	Serious health and safety concerns.
Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)	Helpline: 0303 123 1113 Website: www.ico.org.uk	Data protection or information governance concerns.
Department for Education (DfE)	GOV.UK whistleblowing guidance and reporting portal	Concerns where DfE is the appropriate prescribed body.
Jane Reason	voice@orangetreeschool.org	Role: Independent confidential Speak Up adviser

Appendix B – Speaking Up Decision Guide

Speaking Up – Which Procedure Should I Use?

Use this guide if you are unsure which policy or reporting route is most appropriate.

If your concern is about...	You should usually refer to...
A child who may be at risk of harm	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
A colleague's professional conduct or boundaries	Low-Level Concerns and Professional Boundaries Policy
Your own employment, workload, pay or treatment at work	Grievance Policy
Serious wrongdoing, unlawful conduct, fraud, unsafe practice or matters affecting the public interest	Speaking Up (Whistleblowing) Policy

Ask Yourself

Could someone be at immediate risk?

→ Yes → Report immediately under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.



Does the concern relate to professional conduct or boundaries?

→ Yes → Follow the Low-Level Concerns and Professional Boundaries Policy.



Is the concern about your own employment or treatment at work?

→ Yes → Follow the Grievance Policy.



Does the concern affect others, the school or the wider public interest?

→ Yes → Follow the Speaking Up (Whistleblowing) Policy.

Remember

- You do not need proof before raising a concern.
- You are not expected to investigate.
- If in doubt, seek advice.
- If a child may be at risk, act immediately.
- It is always better to raise a genuine concern than remain silent.

Appendix C – Staff Awareness Poster

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

We want to create a culture where everyone feels heard, respected and supported.

If you have a concern, please follow the steps below:

- 1** 
STEP 1
Contact your Line Manager
 If you have a concern, please speak to your line manager in the first instance.
- 2** 
STEP 2
If the issue wasn't handled well or you have a concern about your Line Manager, please contact your Line Manager's Manager (if there is one).
- 3** 
STEP 3
If you feel you still need assistance, please contact either the Headteacher or use the voice@orangetreeschool.org email, which is overseen by an independent external supervisor (Jane Reason).
- 4** 
STEP 4
If the concern is about the Headteacher, please contact our proprietor.
 peter.curtis@orangetreeschool.org

PLEASE REMEMBER

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| You do not need proof before raising a concern. | You are not expected to investigate. | A genuine concern raised in good faith will always be taken seriously. | Confidentiality will be respected. | If a child may be at risk, report immediately under the Safeguarding Policy. |



We take all concerns seriously and will always aim to respond fairly, promptly and confidentially.
Your voice helps us make our school a better place for everyone.

Thank you!

Speak up. Be heard. Make a difference. ♥



Nurture. Inspire. Achieve.



KEY CONTACTS



Line Managers
 Contact via school email or reception: 020 8441 5503



Headteacher
 020 8441 5503
head@orangetreeschool.org



Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
 020 8441 5503
dsl@orangetreeschool.org



Deputy DSL (DDSL)
 020 8441 5503
ddsl@orangetreeschool.org



Chair of the Advisory Board
chair@orangetreeschool.org



Proprietor
peter.curtis@orangetreeschool.org



Independent Speak Up Contact
voice@orangetreeschool.org
 (managed by Jane Reason)



EXTERNAL CONTACTS

- **Barnet Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**
020 8359 4528
- **Children's Social Care**
020 8359 2000
- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line**
0800 028 0285 (8am–8pm, Mon–Fri)
help@nspcc.org.uk
- **Protect (Independent Advice)**
020 7404 6609
www.protect-advice.org.uk
- **Police (Emergency) 999**
Police (Non-Emergency) 101
- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)**
0300 003 1647
www.hse.gov.uk
- **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)**
0303 123 1113
www.ico.org.uk
- **Department for Education**
0370 000 2288
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education
- **Guidance on raising concerns externally**
www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools

SPEAK UP

See It. Say It. Safeguard It.

If something doesn't feel right... don't ignore it.

Speaking up helps to:

- ✓ Protect children
- ✓ Support colleagues
- ✓ Strengthen safeguarding
- ✓ Improve practice

When should I speak up?

If you are concerned about:

- Unsafe practice
- Professional conduct
- Safeguarding
- Fraud or financial misconduct
- Health and safety
- Unethical behaviour
- Serious breaches of policy

Who can I speak to? (See Appendix A for contact details.)

- Your Line Manager
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Deputy DSL (DDSL)
- Headteacher
- Lead Teacher at Ridgeway
- Chair of the Advisory Board
- Proprietor
- Independent Speak Up Advisor

Remember

- You do not need proof.
- You are not expected to investigate.
- A genuine concern raised in good faith will always be taken seriously.

Orange Tree Promise

If something doesn't feel right, don't ignore it. Speak up. We will listen, respond fairly and use what we learn to strengthen safeguarding, trust and professional practice.