



## NORTHFIELDS CORPORATE GOVERNANCE: WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

### Our Vision

We are committed to empowering learners to reach their full potential through a holistic education. Our students develop an appreciation for cultural diversity while being prepared to become confident, responsible and active global citizens.

### Our Mission

We achieve this by:

- Providing our pupils with learning opportunities that maximise their potential through a structured programme of academic and extra-curricular activities.
- Offering challenging, internationally recognised programmes and qualifications.
- Emphasising the development of socially conscious and environmentally aware global citizens, with a compassion for others and the courage to act on their beliefs.
- Nurturing the growth of principled future leaders.

POLICY NUMBER	ISSUE DATE	VERSION	CUSTODIAN	APPROVED BY
WB.02.2020.1.HR	09/01/2020	1	HR	Corporate Governance, Ethics and Nominations Committee
WB.09.2022.2.HOS	19/09/2022	2	HOS	Corporate Governance, Ethics and Nominations Committee



## Guidance for employees

*Whistleblowing is the disclosure by a member of the community of confidential information, which relates to some danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct connected with the work place and which may lead to legal proceedings.*

The policy applies to all Northfields staff and staff at subsidiaries, stakeholders, volunteers, contractors working in the school, work experience or interns.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

1. Code of Ethics
2. Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy and Procedures
3. Equality and Diversity Policy
4. Complaints and Grievance Procedure
5. Data Protection Act 2017
6. Equal Opportunities Act 2012 (amended in 2017)
7. Workers' Rights Act 2019

The School is fully committed to doing what is right for our employees, students, suppliers, shareholders, community and the environment, as outlined in the Code of Ethics. All employees must uphold the school values and acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of Senior Management. Reporting concerns is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

As an employee, you may feel hesitant to express your concerns. Leadership, including the Board, are fully committed to ensure compliance and rely on the support of all employees and other stakeholders to ensure that we uphold the Code of Ethics in our daily operations and keep on doing what is right.

The Code of Ethics requires that you act honestly, with integrity and with good judgement. If you are ever in a position where you are not sure about the most appropriate behaviour or action, you need to speak up and ask, so that Northfields can assist you in making the right decisions. Furthermore, we all have an obligation and a responsibility to report wrongdoing. Please see Annex 1 for guidance regarding matters which should be reported. Any reports of misconduct that are filed will be investigated, and verified cases of misconduct will be addressed, including any instances of retaliation against individuals reporting misconduct.



## Purpose

The Board of Directors are committed to ethical behaviour in all aspects of the school and will treat whistleblowing as a serious matter. In line with the School's commitment to openness, probity and accountability, members of the community are encouraged to report any concern which could lead to legal proceedings. Such reports will be taken seriously, investigated and appropriate action taken in response. Wherever possible the identity of the whistleblower will be held confidential.

This policy aims to:

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

## Scope of the policy

This policy covers whistleblowing relating to alleged

- 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
- Safety and health issues including risks to the public as well as risks to pupils and members of staff
- Action that has caused or likely to cause danger to the environment
- Abuse of authority
- Unauthorised use of School 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 school property
- Sexual, physical or emotional abuse of members of staff or pupils
- Unfair discrimination or favouritism
- Racist incidents or acts or racial harassments
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- Any attempt to prevent disclosure of any of the issues listed

This policy should not be used for complaints regarding the manner in which an employee has been treated at work. In these circumstances, the Complaints and Grievance Procedures should be followed.



## Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Directors	The Board of Directors have the ultimate responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy.
Corporate Governance, Ethics and Nominations Committee	The Board of Directors have delegated the monitoring function of this policy to the Committee considering the terms of reference that govern the Committee.
Head of School	The Head of School has the responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with discrimination law.
Human Resources Manager	The Human Resources Manager is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, the day-to-day operational responsibility and the review of this policy.
Line Managers	All managers must set an appropriate standard of behaviours, lead by example, and ensure that those they manage adhere to the policy and promote the purpose, School's ethos and code of ethics.
Employees	Staff members should be aware of and personally responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the policy and promote the School's ethos and Code of Ethics.

## Safeguard Against Reprisal, Harassment and Victimisation

The Board of Directors will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of members of staff due to matters raised through the Whistleblowing Policy. Any member of staff who victimises or harasses a member of staff because of their having raised a concern in accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy will be dealt with under the school disciplinary guidelines and as per the Equal Opportunities Act and the Workers' Rights Act 2019.

## Confidentiality

The school recognises that members of the community may want to raise concerns in confidence and will do its utmost to protect the identity of members of those who raise a concern and do not want their name disclosed. However, investigation into the concern could reveal the source of the information; and statements may be required from as part of the evidence, which would be seen by all parties involved. If the investigation leads to prosecution, the whistleblower will likely be called to give evidence in court.

## Anonymous allegations

Those wishing to file a whistleblowing allegation should put their name to allegations whenever possible – anonymous concerns are less credible. The school reserves the right to consider the seriousness of the issues



raised, how valid the concern is and the likelihood that the allegation can be confirmed from other resources.

## Untrue and malicious / vexatious allegations

If an allegation is filed in good faith but it is not confirmed by further inquiry, the matter will be closed and no further action taken. If, however, the inquiry shows that untrue allegations were malicious and/or vexatious or made for personal gain, then the School will consider taking disciplinary and/or legal action against the member of staff.

## Allegations concerning child protection issues

If a member of staff wishes to raise a concern related to a child protection issues, she/he should urgently consult the designated safeguarding lead so that the action for the handling of such allegations under the school's disciplinary procedure for staff and the child protection procedure established by the Safeguarding policy can be initiated.

## Procedure for making a whistleblowing allegation

Should you wish to raise a whistleblowing allegation you may do so by filing an Whistleblowing Allegation Form (Annex 2), which may be accessed [HERE](#) and emailing the form to our **designated whistleblowing address** at [northfields@eversheds-sutherland.mu](mailto:northfields@eversheds-sutherland.mu). Any allegations received at this address will be forwarded to Independent Board member appointed by the Board of Directors to address Whistleblowing matters, **Mrs Alexis Botes**.

When filing the allegation, please include as much detail as possible for the avoidance of doubt. You should set out the background and history of the concern; giving names, dates and places where possible. Any supporting evidence can be provided by email or in a sealed envelope at the School Office addressed to the attention of **Mrs Alexis Botes**.

If the concern requires police or other statutory authority involvement, the whistleblowing process will be halted until the statutory authority have completed their investigations and confirmed that it is appropriate to continue with the whistleblowing process.

## Response to whistleblowing

The action to be taken will depend on the seriousness of the concern. The matter raised may:

- Lead to an inquiry internally in the school
- Need to be passed to the person who deals with complaints about financial management or financial propriety in the school
- Need to be referred to the safeguarding lead or the local authority if there is a concern relating to child protection
- Need to be passed to the police if it relates to alleged criminal activity

At this stage, concerns/ allegations are neither accepted nor rejected.



## Timescale for response

The Independent Director will normally provide a written response to you within 5 working days following receipt of the allegation form. The response will

- Acknowledge that the concern has been received
- Indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter
- Give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Advise whether any enquiries have been made
- Advise whether further enquiries will take place
- Inform you of support available whilst matters are looked into, and
- Maintain confidentiality wherever possible.

## The enquiry process

The Independent Director or designee will:

1. Look into the allegation – seeking evidence and interviewing witnesses as necessary
2. Maintain confidentiality wherever possible, but will be mindful that there is no guarantee that the whistle blower can remain anonymous
3. If appropriate, bring the matter to the attention of the Director dealing with complaints about financial management of schools
4. If appropriate for concerns of criminal behaviour, refer the matter to the police
5. If appropriate for concerns of child protection, refer the matter to the designated Safeguarding lead or child protection/ local authority for child protection. This whistleblowing process will be halted until the statutory authorities have completed their investigation and confirmed that it is appropriate to continue with the whistleblowing process.

If the Independent Director appointed by the Board of Directors needs to talk to a member of staff, he or she is permitted to be accompanied by a fellow member of staff not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

The target is to complete the enquiry within 10 working days from the date of the initial written response. If the enquiry extends beyond the timescales outlined for any reason, all individuals concerned will be notified of this in writing with an indication when the inquiry will be completed.

## The inquiry report

Following completion of the inquiry process the Independent Director will make a written report and submit to the Corporate Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee normally within 5 working days. The report will not contain the whistleblower's name unless you have expressly stated that you wish to be named.

Following receipt of the inquiry report, the Committee will make a formal recommendation to the Board for approval. This should normally take place within 5-10 working days following receipt of the inquiry report.



Following notification of the committee's decision, the Independent Director will notify you of the outcome, normally within 5 working days (except in relation to anonymous allegations), setting out the action to be taken or stating that no further action is to be taken and the reason why.

## Taking the matter further

If you are not satisfied with the way the matter has been dealt with by the Board, you can make a complaint under the School's grievance procedure and/or raise your concerns with other organisations.

## Policy review

Monitoring will include assessing how the Whistleblowing Policy, and any supporting documents or forms, are working in practice, reviewing them every two years, and considering and taking action to address any issues.



## ANNEX 1 - GUIDANCE NOTE FOR MEMBERS OF STAFF

This guidance should be followed if you suspect any conduct or practice in any area of the school's activities which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice.

### DO

- Make an immediate note of your concerns.
- Note all relevant details such as what was said in telephone or other conversations, the date, time and the names of any parties involved; or any action observed.
- Convey your suspicions to someone with the appropriate authority and experience e.g. your line manager, a member of the Senior Management Team, or the Board of Directors.

### DO NOT

- Do nothing.
- Be afraid of raising your concerns. You must not suffer any recrimination as a result of voicing a reasonably held suspicion. The Head of School and/or Board of Directors will treat any matter you raise sensitively and confidentially wherever possible (if you feel that the matter raised is not being treated sensitively and seriously then seek professional or alternative advice).
- Approach or accuse any individuals directly.
- Try to investigate the matter yourself. There are rules surrounding the gathering of evidence for use in criminal cases and in relation to child protection cases. Any attempt to gather evidence by people who are unfamiliar with these rules may destroy the case.
- Convey your suspicions to anyone other than those with the proper authority.





## ANNEX 2 - WHISTLEBLOWING ALLEGATION FORM

This form is intended for use by an individual who believes that there has been a case of wrongdoing and in that respect would like to submit a report.

All sections of this form should be completed by the person making the report. Please provide as much information as possible to allow for a thorough and fair investigation.

The completed form will be transmitted directly to a member of the Board acting as an independent investigator. All information reported in this form will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Northfields recognises that an individual may still wish to file a report anonymously.

Please bear in mind that any information reported anonymously may be not admissible for further action based on the legislation in Mauritius.

### Section 1-About You

By filling this section, you are hereby giving your consent to share your identity with an Independent investigator who will then consult with the Principal and/or HR Manager as appropriate.

Do you consent to share your identity in this way? If so, please complete the requested information about yourself below. If not and you would like to report anonymously, please choose 'no' and proceed immediately to the next section.

Do you consent to share your identity?

- Yes, I consent to release my identity
- No, I wish to remain anonymous

Surname:

.....

First Name:

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Email:

.....

Phone Number:

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## Section 2- Identify the Concern

Name of the Person involved: .....

Section of the School involved: .....

The matter you would like to disclose:

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## Section 3- Report of Incident

Any supporting evidence can be provided by email on [northfields@eversheds-sutherland.mu](mailto:northfields@eversheds-sutherland.mu) or at the Front Office together with this form in a sealed envelope to the attention of the **Independent Director, Mrs Alexis Botes.**

Please state policies, procedures and guidelines that you feel have been breached

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Please use this section to tell us as much as you can giving details of your disclosure, explaining, with evidence (if available), where there is a breach/irregularities

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## Section 4: Signature and Submission

If you have chosen to remain anonymous, you may skip the signature.

Signature:.....

Date:.....