



Silver Tree
STEINER SCHOOL

Whistleblower Policy

2020

This procedure is applicable to: Teachers, Staff, Volunteers, Parents and Students

AUTHORISED BY:	Head of School
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CONTENTS

PURPOSE	3
APPLICATION.....	3
BACKGROUND.....	3
DEFINITIONS.....	3
LEGISLATION	4
RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.....	4
GUIDELINES	5
BREACH	7

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Whistleblower Policy is to allow Silver Tree Steiner School's staff, parents, students, and volunteers to report serious concerns about school operations through appropriate and confidential channels without risk of retaliation, victimisation or harassment in any form. The policy is to ensure that all school operations are conducted ethically and with integrity.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to and is binding upon all employees, parents, students and volunteers of STSS. This document establishes School policy relating to:

- Investigation of disclosed matters, and
- Protecting people from reprisals because of disclosures.

BACKGROUND

Silver Tree Steiner School recognises the value of transparency and accountability in its administrative and management practices and supports the making of disclosures that reveal corrupt conduct, conduct involving a substantial mismanagement of resources, or conduct involving a substantial risk to public health and safety or the environment.

It is Silver Tree's policy that all staff, students, volunteers and parents are free to report, without fear of retaliation, activity that the reporting person believes in good faith to be illegal, dishonest, unethical, fraudulent, or not in compliance with the school policy.

This policy is designed to complement normal communication channels between the leadership team, employees, volunteers, school staff, students and parents. Employees, volunteers, students and parents are encouraged to continue to raise appropriate matters at any time with the Leadership team and or the Head of School or Chairperson of the Board of Governors. As an alternative, employees, volunteers, students and parents may make disclosure of improper conduct, mismanagement or corruption in accordance with Silver Tree's Whistleblower Policy.

Reported allegations will be treated confidentially to the greatest extent possible and will be promptly investigated. Neither the School nor any of its employees, students, parents or volunteers will take adverse employment or other action in retaliation against a person/s who reports information under this policy.

Silver Tree Steiner School will take all reasonable steps to protect persons who make such disclosures from any detrimental action in reprisal for making the disclosure. The School will also afford procedural fairness to the person/s who is subject to the disclosure.

DEFINITIONS

Whistleblowing is the means by which employees, volunteers, parents and students can raise concerns about conduct or practices within the School which are potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, dishonest, unsafe and unethical or which amounts to mismanagement, and are able to do so without fear of victimisation and with the confidence that their concerns will be

taken seriously and dealt with properly.

A Whistleblower is defined as a person who discloses wrong doings, corruption, mismanagement and any illegal activities taking place within the School.

LEGISLATION

- Public-Interest Disclosure Act 2003 (WA) s.15 (1)
- Corporations Act 2001

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Child Protection Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Concerns and Grievances Policy
- Code of Conduct

GUIDELINES

1. Safeguard against reprisal, harassment and victimisation

Silver Tree Steiner School will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of members of staff, volunteers, parents and students when matters are raised in accordance with the Whistleblower Policy. Any members of staff, volunteers, parents or students who victimise or harass any person as a result of their having raised a concern in accordance with the Whistleblower Policy may be dealt with under Silver Tree's disciplinary procedures and applicable State laws.

2. Confidentiality

The School recognises that members of staff, volunteers, students and parents may want to raise concerns in confidence and will do its utmost to protect the identity of members of staff, volunteers, students and parents who raise 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 the member of staff, volunteer, student or parent as part of the evidence, which would be seen by all parties involved if the investigation leads to prosecution and the Whistleblower is likely to be called in to give evidence in court.

3. Anonymous Allegation

Members of staff, volunteers, students and parents, themselves or on behalf of their child should put their name to allegations wherever possible – anonymous concerns are much less powerful. Nonetheless, anonymous allegations will be considered under this Whistleblower Policy. In relation to determining whether an anonymous allegation will be taken forward the School will take the following factors into account.

- The seriousness of the issue raised;
- The credibility of the concern;
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources, and obtaining information provided.

4. Untrue and malicious/vexatious allegations

If a member of staff, student, volunteer or parent makes an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by further inquiry, the matter will be closed, and no further action taken. If, however, the enquiry shows the untrue allegations were malicious and/or vexatious, or made for personal gain, then the school will consider taking disciplinary action.

5. Other complaints and allegations concerning child protection

This policy is separate from the School Concerns and Grievances policy and other statutory reporting procedures. Child Protection issues should be reported according to the specific guidelines outlined in the Child Protection Policy.

6. Reporting Process

Staff members, volunteers, students and parents who have knowledge of or information about mismanagement, illegal activities, corruption or misconduct in school operations should report the misconduct in writing to a member of the Leadership Team or the Head of School. If a serious allegation of misconduct relates to a member of the School Management, a written complaint should be made to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors. If a serious allegation of misconduct relates to the Head of School, a written complaint should be made to:

Chairperson

Annabelle Kellenberger
akellenberger@pws.wa.edu.au

7. Timescale for initial response

A member of the Leadership Team or Head of School who is investigating allegations will normally provide a written response to the whistleblower within five working days (except in the case of anonymous allegations):

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- Indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter;
- Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- Advising whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- Advising whether further enquiries will take place;
- Informing the whistleblower of support available whilst matters are investigated.

8. Addressing reports of misconduct

Persons reporting misconduct in school operations should not attempt to investigate the matter independently, as doing so may compromise the integrity of an official investigation and adversely impact both the reporting person and the School.

A member of the Leadership Team or the Head of School will promptly and discreetly investigate any report of misconduct in school operations, with the assistance of other School officials as appropriate. The Leadership Team and the Head of School will report the results of their investigation and any recommendations for appropriate corrective and/or disciplinary action to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

The Chairperson will consult with other Board members, the Head of School and the relevant Leadership Team members to decide on the action to be taken before implementing corrective, disciplinary action. In serious matters the concern will immediately be reported to the appropriate Federal, State or local governing body.

The imposition of discipline, if any, will be made in accordance with the School's Code of Conduct, and Ethical Standards for Western Australia Teachers, Professional

Standards for Western Australia Teachers and any other applicable school policies. In serious cases the matter will be dealt with under the appropriate Federal, State and local laws.

Following notification of the Board of Governor's decision, the whistleblower will be notified of the outcome normally within five working days (except in relation to anonymous allegations), setting out the action to be taken or that no further action is to be taken and the reasons why.

If the Board of Governors is the subject of a report of misconduct, the Head of School will work with another Board Member to substitute for the Chairperson in his/her investigative or decision-making role.

BREACH

If you breach this policy, you may be subject to disciplinary actions.

Responsibility: Head of School.