



# Whistleblowing Policy

## Group Policy

June 2024

### **KEY FACTS:**

You are encouraged to report to Cognita any suspected wrongdoing within your School or Cognita.

Members of staff who raise genuine concerns under this Whistleblowing Policy (the “Policy”) will be supported, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment (including dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment) as a result of raising a genuine concern (“Detrimental Treatment”).

You should ordinarily report wrongdoing internally. In most cases it will not be necessary to alert anyone externally.

Reports made maliciously or in bad faith may lead to disciplinary action.

For reporting allegations of abuse or any child protection concern please refer to the *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*.

## **1. Purpose and Scope**

- 1.1. Cognita is committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity and we expect all staff to do the same. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time or unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct.
- 1.2. Cognita encourages a culture of open communication and accountability to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do.
- 1.3. This Policy applies to all individuals working for Cognita including all individuals working within a Cognita School. It applies to individuals working at all levels whether full-time, part-time or temporary. Reporting suspected wrongdoing is often called 'whistleblowing'. If you blow the whistle in good faith, you are protected from Detrimental Treatment, irrespective of whether the suspected wrongdoing turns out to be well founded.
- 1.4. This Policy does not form part of your contract of employment and we may amend it from time to time.
- 1.5. The aims of this Policy are:
  - 1.5.1. To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately, and that their confidentiality will be respected;
  - 1.5.2. To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise their concerns;
  - 1.5.3. To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

## **2. When to use this Policy**

- 2.1. You should use this Policy when you suspect wrongdoing within the School/Cognita.
- 2.2. Wrongdoing may include:
  - 2.2.1. Actions which endanger the Health and Safety of others or the environment;
  - 2.2.2. Concerns about poor or unsafe practice, including in relation to the care and protection of a pupil or pupils;
  - 2.2.3. Conduct which suggests extremism or radicalisation of other staff or pupils;
  - 2.2.4. Allegations against adults – see [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#);
  - 2.2.5. Bribery or corruption;
  - 2.2.6. Criminal activity;
  - 2.2.7. Fraud or other financial irregularities;
  - 2.2.8. Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
  - 2.2.9. Conduct likely to damage the reputation of the School/Cognita;
  - 2.2.10. Misuse of sensitive or confidential information;
  - 2.2.11. Miscarriages of justice;
  - 2.2.12. Breaches of our internal policies and procedures;
  - 2.2.13. Any activity or state of affairs within the School/Cognita or anywhere in our supply chain which amounts to modern slavery; and
  - 2.2.14. Deliberate attempts to conceal any of the above.
- 2.3. A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concern related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities, you should report it under this Policy.

- 2.4. This Policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work.
- 2.5. If you are uncertain about whether something is within the scope of this Policy, you should seek advice from the Whistleblowing Officer (whose contact details are set out below).

### **3. How to Raise Your Concern**

- 3.1. If you have any concerns about wrongdoing, you should contact the Whistleblowing Officer:

Jamie Delaney  
Email: [whistleblowingofficer@cognita.com](mailto:whistleblowingofficer@cognita.com)

- 3.2. It will help if you state the facts of the matter clearly. If you have a direct or personal interest in the matter, you should also tell us at this stage.
- 3.3. When you have raised your concerns, the Whistleblowing Officer will determine if they fall within the scope of this Policy.
- 3.4. If your concerns do not fall within the scope of this Policy, you will be advised on how best to progress your concerns.
- 3.5. If your concerns do fall within the scope of this Policy, the Whistleblowing Officer (or a suitable authorised person) will initially assess what action should be taken and a meeting will be arranged with you as soon as possible to discuss your concerns.
- 3.6. We will take down a written summary of your concerns and provide you with a copy after the meeting. We will also aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

### **4. Investigation and Outcome**

- 4.1. Once you have raised any concerns, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.
- 4.2. In some cases we may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.
- 4.3. You may request that the matter is managed and investigated at the relevant country or regional level.
- 4.4. You will be told who is handling the matter and how you can contact him/her. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.
- 4.5. Please be aware that the School/Cognita may not be able to discuss details with you but will endeavour to keep you well apprised of progress and the investigation's likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us from giving specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.
- 4.6. If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false or malicious accusations, the whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action.

4.7. The School/Cognita cannot guarantee that all matters will be responded to in the way that you would like, but every reasonable effort will be made to handle the matter fairly and properly. If you are unhappy with the School/Cognita's response, you can escalate your concern to a key Cognita contact whose details will be provided to you if requested.

## **5. General information**

5.1. You may bring a colleague or representative to any meetings under this Policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

5.2. Where appropriate, the School/Cognita will inform appropriate external bodies of any serious malpractice and/or concerns which come to light as a result of the investigation. In certain circumstances (e.g. child protection) the School/Cognita may need to do so before embarking on any investigation (see [\*\*\*Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy\*\*\*](#)).

5.3. If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith and no wrongdoing is found on further inquiry, the matter will ordinarily be closed and no further action taken.

## **6. Confidentiality**

6.1. We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this Policy. However, if you want to raise your concerns confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity hidden although this will not always be possible. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.

6.2. We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the Whistleblowing Officer and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality.

6.3. It will almost always be necessary to inform the relevant internal Legal Counsel and HR Lead of any whistleblowing.

## **7. External Referrals**

7.1. The aim of this Policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

7.2. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Please also refer to our conduct-related policies.

7.3. Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party. We encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact the Whistleblowing Officer for guidance.

## **8. Child Protection concerns**

8.1. In respect of any child protection concerns, you should follow the School's [\*\*\*Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy\*\*\*](#) rather than this Policy.

8.2. If a member of staff raises a concern related to a child protection issue in a School, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Head of that School should be informed immediately and where appropriate a referral to external should be made in accordance with the School's ***Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy***. A member of staff may refer child protection concerns directly to these external bodies.

8.3. In some exceptional circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an outside regulatory body. If in doubt, please refer to the HR Lead.

## **9. Protection and Support for Whistleblowers**

9.1. It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this Policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

9.2. If you have raised a genuine concern through this Policy, the School/Cognita will ensure you suffer no Detrimental Treatment. Provided you have a reasonable belief that your disclosure is in the public interest, it does not matter whether or not your concern proves to be well founded.

9.3. If you are not sure whether a disclosure is in the public interest, you should consider the following:

9.3.1. The number of individuals whose interests the disclosure concerns – the more individuals concerned, the more likely it is that the disclosure will be in the public interest;

9.3.2. The nature of the wrongdoing disclosed – if the wrongdoing is deliberate, it is more likely it will be in the public interest; and

9.3.3. The interests affected – the more serious the wrongdoing and the more important the interests affected, the more likely it is that the disclosure will be in the public interest.

9.4. Some examples of disclosures that are likely to be in the public interest include:

9.4.1. A disclosure that an employer is responsible for a leak of highly confidential information concerning all its employees;

9.4.2. A disclosure that an employer is responsible for contaminating the water supplies in an area in which it operates.

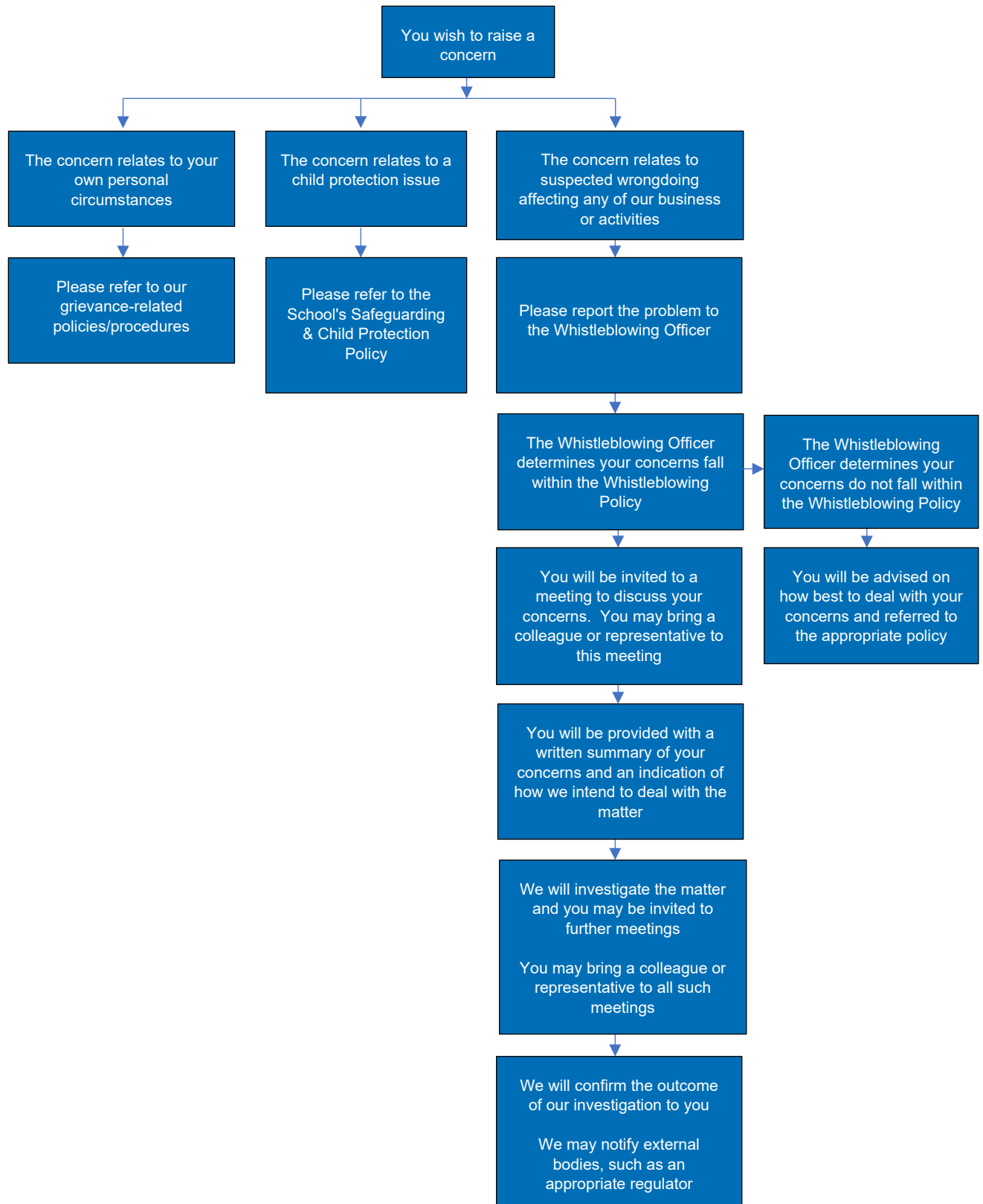
9.5. Whistleblowers must not suffer any Detrimental Treatment as a result of raising any concerns. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Whistleblowing Officer immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using the applicable grievance procedure and/or policy.

9.6. You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action. In some cases, the whistleblower could have a right to sue you personally for compensation in an employment tribunal.

9.7. Any employee who victimises another because they have invoked this Policy will be dealt with under the relevant disciplinary action procedure and their actions may constitute gross misconduct.

- 9.8. We will not tolerate abuse of this Policy. If an investigation shows that untrue allegations were malicious and/or vexatious or made for personal gain then the School/Cognita will consider taking disciplinary action against that individual in accordance with the relevant disciplinary action policy.

## 10. Whistleblowing Flowchart



<b>Ownership and consultation</b>	
Document sponsor (role)	Group General Counsel
Document author (role)	Group General Counsel and HR Director Europe
Specialist Legal Advice	Dentons
Consultation	HR Director Europe Legal Counsel Europe HR Director Asia Legal Counsel Asia HR Director Brazil HR Director Chile Legal Counsel Chile Head of HR ME
Document review and maintenance (role)	Group General Counsel

<b>Compliance</b>	
Compliance with	Local legislation

<b>Audience</b>	
Audience	Group Policy

<b>Document application</b>	
Group Wide	Yes

<b>Version control</b>	
Implementation date	June 2024
Review date	June 2025