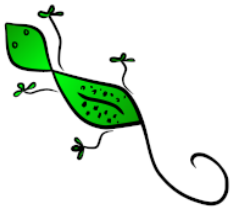
Whistleblowing



Gecko Community

Empower, Inspire, Educate

Legislation / Guidance that inform this document

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Gov.UK Sept 2026)
- Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998)
- Whistleblowing for Employees (Gov.UK - https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing/who-to-tell-what-to-expect)

Other Gecko policies to be read in conjunction with this one

- Code of Conduct for all Staff
- Complaints (including internal grievance procedure)
- Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Staff
- Esafety
- Safeguarding and Child Protection

The Public Interest Disclosure Act was enacted to ensure a climate of greater frankness between employers and workers so that irregularities might be identified and addressed quickly and to strengthen employment rights by protecting responsible workers who blow the whistle about wrongdoing or failures in the workplace.

Statement of intent

Gecko Community aims to ensure the highest possible standards of practice amongst all staff and to ensure that staff feel able to report and discuss any practice on the part of others that might lead to failure to meet that aim.

Responsibility for implementation

Trustees must ensure that all staff are aware of Gecko Community's commitment to high quality practice and of the right to 'whistleblow' if practice is deemed to 'fall short' within those areas outlined within this policy. It is subsequently the responsibility of all staff to follow the policy if they feel that such action is required.

Aims and scope of the policy

This policy aims to provide avenues for staff to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken and to enable staff to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with Gecko Community's response.

According to government guidance, 'whistleblowing' is defined as taking place "when a worker reports suspected wrongdoing at work". Officially this is called 'making a disclosure in the public interest'.

Whistleblowing covers concerns that fall outside the scope of general procedures. It is not intended as a recourse against proper financial or business decisions made by the organisation, nor is it an alternative to well-established disciplinary or grievance procedures. Features of this policy will, however, inevitably overlap with Gecko Community's complaints policy.

The Gov.UK guidance (Whistleblowing for Employees) notes that any whistleblowing, "must be in the public interest", hence it, "must affect others, eg the general public".

Whistleblowing legislation covers:

- a criminal offence, eg fraud;
- action that endangers someone's health or safety;
- any risk or actual damage to the environment;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- a failure on the part of an employer to meet legal requirements, eg to have required insurance;
- safeguarding issues as described within Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2026);
- reporting practice wherein an employee is covering up the wrongdoing of another employee.

Personal grievances (eg bullying, harassment, discrimination) are not covered by whistleblowing legislation... any such grievance should be pursued as described within Gecko Community's internal grievance policy.

Safeguard

Gecko Community recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice. Gecko Community will take action to protect any member of staff who raises a concern in good faith. It will not tolerate any resulting harassment or victimisation and will treat any such action as a serious disciplinary offence that will be dealt with under the appropriate procedures.

Any investigation into an allegation of malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures which might be underway.

All concerns will be treated in confidence and Gecko Community will attempt to protect the identity of any staff member who wishes that to be the case. If investigation of a concern discloses a situation that is sufficiently serious to warrant disciplinary action or police involvement, then further evidence may be important. Gecko Community will

not, however, release or forward the name of any whistleblower until the reasons for doing so have been fully discussed with the staff member.

Anonymous Allegations

Staff are encouraged to put their name to any allegation made; it is hoped that the safeguarding procedures described above will enable them to do that. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but they will be investigated at the discretion of Gecko Community against the following criteria:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources;
- Gecko Community's best interests.

Clearly it is more difficult to investigate anonymous allegations, and it is not possible to provide feedback to the complainant.

'Whistleblowing for Employees' states that, "you can give your name but request confidentiality - the person or body you tell should make every effort to protect your identity". Gecko Community will make every effort to comply with that.

It further states that if an employee elects to report their concern(s) to the media, in 'most cases' they will lose their 'whistleblowing law rights'.

Untrue Allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith but is not confirmed by the investigation, no reprisals will be taken against the complainant. If, however, malicious or vexatious allegations are found to have been made, disciplinary action may be taken against the complainant.

Safeguarding Issues

As emphasised in Keeping Children safe in Education (Sept 2026) whistleblowing is a key element of good practice to ensure the safety of students. Staff must raise a concern if they believe any other member of staff, volunteer or visiting practitioner is behaving inappropriately towards a student or group of students. Equally, if any member of staff believes that the DSL (designated safeguarding lead) is not pursuing a concern that has been raised with sufficient robustness, then they should 'blow the whistle' to indicate this failure in practice.

How to raise a concern

As a first step, any staff member should raise a concern with their line manager. This should not be done 'unofficially' (for example, in a conversation at breaktime). Instead a meeting time should be arranged and the issue raised in a formal manner.

If, for some reason, this first step is inappropriate (e.g. the concern relates to the practice of the employee's direct line manager), then the concern should be raised with Vikki Mead a trustee, email: vikki.mead@geckocommunity.org.uk is ultimately responsible for safeguarding as the chair of trustees.

Concerns may be raised orally, but it is good practice for the concern to be recorded in writing at an early stage to ensure that all the details are correctly understood. A written allegation should set out the background and history of the concern (giving names, dates and places where possible) and specify the 'area(s) of concern' - what is it that the staff member has done, or not done? It is preferable for the initial complaint to be made in writing. Where that is not the case, the person to whom the concerns are verbalised will write them down and a copy will be sent to the staff member's home address (or to an email address) or to a nominated representative so that it may be checked for accuracy.

It is essential that the staff member is able to provide evidence to support the concern.

It is perfectly legitimate for any staff member to seek advice from a trade union to which they belong as to how a complaint should be made, or to ask that union to make the complaint on their behalf.

How a complaint will be responded to

The action taken will depend upon the nature of the concern. After initial enquiries to assess the seriousness of the matter, it may be investigated internally (employing specific procedures where these are applicable, as in child protection or discrimination issues for example) or referred to an external agency (eg police, auditor) for further examination. Thereafter it may form the subject of an independent inquiry or be considered by the Group as part of its ongoing monitoring to ensure high quality practice.

If urgent action is considered to be required in response to a concern, this may be taken before a full investigation is conducted.

It may be possible for the concern to be addressed with the complainant without the need for investigation or it may be that an investigation can be completed without the person or persons under investigation being aware of the process.

In any event, within ten working days of a concern being received, the person with whom that concern was raised will write to the complainant at their home address:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- indicating how the matter is to be dealt with;

- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- detailing any initial enquiries made;
- describing what further investigations will take place;
- if there is no further action to be taken, explaining how that decision has been reached and the justification for the decision;
- naming an independent officer to support the complainant during any investigation (support officer).

The named support officer will immediately make contact with the staff member, explain his or her role, deal with all confidentiality issues, agree frequency of contact and keep the staff member informed about the progress of the investigation. S/he will also keep the investigating officer(s) informed of any further issues considered pertinent by the complainant.

The staff member should raise any concerns they have about the conduct of the investigation with the support officer, who will take appropriate steps to support them in the workplace and at any criminal or disciplinary proceedings that may eventually result from the whistleblowing.

If the staff member wishes to retain anonymity, then s/he must nominate a representative to whom all correspondence can be sent.

When any meeting is arranged, the staff member has the right to be accompanied by a union or professional association representative or a friend.

Detriment

Gecko Community is committed to ensuring that any employee who makes an allegation in good faith suffers no detriment from doing so.

How the matter can be taken further

It is hoped that Gecko Community's commitment to high quality practice, to openness and to this whistleblowing policy will ensure that, wherever there are issues concerning practice, they will be addressed to the satisfaction of all concerned.

If, however, this is not the case and a whistleblower remains dissatisfied with Gecko Community's response to the concern(s) raised, then that person should raise their continuing concern outside Gecko Community. They may wish to seek legal advice under such circumstances. Suggested agencies with which ongoing concerns might be addressed (depending on the nature of the concern) are:

- Independent Schools Inspection Service (ISI),
- appropriate (geographically) Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) or Local

Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for safeguarding concerns;

- trade union or other professional / regulatory body,
- police,
- local government ombudsman,
- health and safety executive,
- local councillor or MP,
- ‘Public Concern at Work’ (a registered charity).

This list is not exhaustive: any complainant who is not satisfied with Gecko Community’s response may pursue their concerns with any agency they feel to be most appropriate.

Maintaining Records

A complete written record of any whistleblowing issue raised and subsequent investigation of that issue, together with the outcomes of that investigation, will be made and held by Gecko Community electronically. All records will be made available to any inspecting agency during their regulatory visits.

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Emily Hartley-Heaven
Placement Coordinator and Safeguarding Lead



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