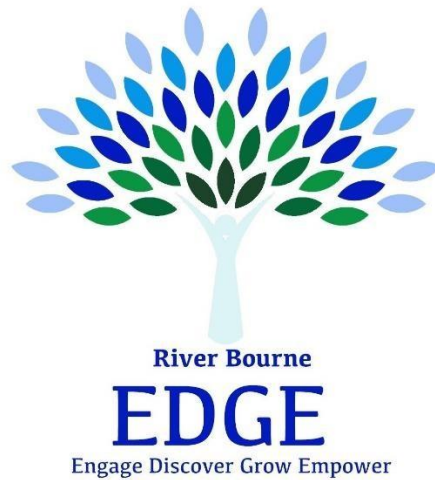




River Bourne Edge Alternative Provision

Whistle Blowing Policy

Policy Owner: Head of Provision
Approved by: Senior Leadership Team
Policy Date: July 2026
Review Date: July 2027

1. Policy Statement

The River Bourne Edge is committed to maintaining the highest standards of honesty, integrity, openness and accountability in all aspects of its work.

We encourage all employees, volunteers, agency workers, contractors and others working on behalf of The River Bourne Edge to raise concerns where they believe that wrongdoing, malpractice, illegal activity or unsafe practice has occurred or may occur.

The River Bourne Edge recognises that a culture where concerns can be raised openly is essential to safeguarding children, protecting staff and maintaining public confidence in our organisation.

Anyone raising a genuine concern in good faith will be supported and protected from victimisation or detrimental treatment.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- encourage staff to report genuine concerns without fear of reprisal;
- ensure concerns are investigated appropriately and fairly;
- protect children, young people, staff and the organisation;
- promote a culture of openness, transparency and accountability;
- ensure compliance with current whistleblowing legislation;
- support effective safeguarding practice.

This policy should be read alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and Low-Level Concerns Policy.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals working for or on behalf of The River Bourne Edge, including:

- employees;
- volunteers;
- agency workers;
- contractors;
- consultants;
- governors/directors;
- students on placement;
- apprentices.

This policy does **not** apply to personal employment grievances, such as disagreements about pay, workload or employment terms.

Such matters should be addressed through the organisation's Grievance Policy.

4. Legislation and Guidance

This policy has been developed in accordance with current legislation and guidance, including:

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Current Edition)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Current Edition)
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

The River Bourne Edge will review this policy whenever significant changes to legislation or statutory guidance occur.

5. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of concerns about suspected wrongdoing, malpractice or illegal activity that is believed to be in the public interest.

A whistleblowing concern may relate to:

- criminal offences;
- safeguarding failures;
- abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable adults;
- breaches of legal obligations;
- health and safety risks;
- financial malpractice or fraud;
- bribery or corruption;
- environmental damage;
- misuse of public funds;
- breaches of professional standards;
- deliberate concealment of any of the above.

The concern does not need to be proven. Staff are encouraged to report concerns where they have a **reasonable belief** that wrongdoing has occurred or is likely to occur.

6. Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

If a concern relates to the immediate safety or welfare of a child or young person, staff must follow The River Bourne Edge's **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** immediately.

Whistleblowing procedures should never delay action required to protect a child.

Where appropriate, safeguarding concerns may also constitute whistleblowing concerns and both procedures may operate alongside one another.

7. Raising a Concern

The River Bourne Edge encourages concerns to be raised as early as possible.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing.

Where appropriate, concerns should normally be raised with:

- the individual's Line Manager;
- the Head of Provision.

If the concern relates to the Head of Provision, staff should report directly to the **Chair of Directors**.

Where concerns relate to safeguarding or the conduct of adults working with children, advice may also be sought from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where appropriate.

All concerns will be taken seriously and considered fairly.

8. Confidentiality and Protection

The River Bourne Edge will make every reasonable effort to protect the identity of individuals who raise concerns.

Information will only be shared where necessary to investigate the concern or where required by law.

No individual will suffer dismissal, disciplinary action, discrimination, harassment or any other detrimental treatment for raising a genuine concern in good faith, even if the concern is not ultimately substantiated.

However, knowingly making false or malicious allegations may result in disciplinary action.

9. Anonymous Concerns

Anonymous concerns will be considered where sufficient information is provided to allow an appropriate investigation.

However, anonymous reports may be more difficult to investigate thoroughly, particularly where clarification or further evidence is required.

Where possible, staff are encouraged to identify themselves when raising concerns so that appropriate support and feedback can be provided.

10. How We Will Respond to Concerns

All whistleblowing concerns will be treated seriously and handled promptly, fairly and confidentially.

When a concern is raised, The River Bourne Edge will:

- acknowledge receipt of the concern where appropriate;
- assess the nature and seriousness of the information provided;
- determine whether immediate action is required to protect children, staff or others;
- appoint an appropriate person to investigate the concern;
- seek advice from external agencies where necessary;
- keep the individual raising the concern informed of progress where appropriate.

The extent of any investigation will depend on the nature of the concern.

Some concerns may be resolved through management action, whilst others may require formal investigation by external agencies.

Although every effort will be made to provide feedback, there may be occasions where confidentiality or legal requirements prevent full details of the outcome being shared.

11. External Reporting

The River Bourne Edge encourages concerns to be raised internally wherever possible.

However, where an individual reasonably believes that:

- the concern has not been dealt with appropriately;
- the concern involves senior leaders or directors;
- there is a risk that evidence may be concealed;
- there is an immediate safeguarding risk;
- it would not be appropriate to raise the concern internally,

they may report their concerns directly to an appropriate external organisation.

Depending upon the nature of the concern, this may include:

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- Children's Social Care
- Ofsted
- Police
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- Charity Commission (where applicable)
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

Individuals considering making an external disclosure are encouraged to seek advice where appropriate to ensure concerns are reported through the correct channels.

12. Protection for Whistleblowers

The River Bourne Edge is committed to ensuring that individuals who raise genuine concerns in good faith are protected.

No person will suffer detrimental treatment because they have:

- raised a genuine whistleblowing concern;
- participated in an investigation;
- provided evidence during an investigation.

Detrimental treatment may include:

- dismissal;
- disciplinary action;
- bullying or harassment;
- intimidation;
- victimisation;
- unfair treatment;
- denial of promotion or training opportunities.

Any individual found to have victimised or retaliated against a whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action.

13. Malicious or False Allegations

The River Bourne Edge encourages staff to raise concerns whenever they believe wrongdoing may have occurred.

A concern raised honestly and in good faith will never result in disciplinary action simply because it is not substantiated following investigation.

However, where it is established that an allegation has been made knowingly, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken in accordance with the organisation's Disciplinary Policy.

14. Record Keeping

A confidential record will be maintained of all whistleblowing concerns.

Records will include:

- the nature of the concern;
- the date it was raised;
- action taken;
- the outcome of any investigation;
- any recommendations arising from the investigation.

Records will be stored securely and managed in accordance with the Data Protection Policy and UK GDPR.

Access will be restricted to those with a legitimate need to know.

15. Monitoring and Review

The Senior Leadership Team will monitor the implementation of this policy to ensure concerns are managed consistently, fairly and effectively.

Monitoring may include:

- reviewing the number and nature of whistleblowing concerns;
- identifying patterns or themes;
- reviewing the effectiveness of investigations;
- ensuring lessons learned are implemented;
- reviewing staff awareness and confidence in reporting concerns.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if changes to legislation, statutory guidance or organisational practice require amendments.

16. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
 - Staff Code of Conduct
 - Low-Level Concerns Policy
 - Safer Recruitment Policy
 - Behaviour Policy
 - Complaints Policy
 - Grievance Policy
 - Disciplinary Policy
 - Health and Safety Policy
 - Data Protection Policy
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17. Equality Statement

The River Bourne Edge is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

No individual will be disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern in good faith.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate to ensure that all individuals are able to access and use this policy.

18. Policy Summary

The River Bourne Edge is committed to fostering a culture of openness, honesty and accountability.

Every member of staff has a responsibility to speak up if they believe that wrongdoing, unsafe practice or safeguarding failures are taking place.

By encouraging concerns to be raised promptly and responding appropriately, we help to:

- protect children and young people;
- support staff;
- maintain high professional standards;
- strengthen safeguarding practice;
- promote trust and accountability across the organisation.

Everyone has a role to play in ensuring that The River Bourne Edge remains a safe place to learn and work.