SAFE START SCHOOL

WILLPOWER-INITIATIVE-SUCCESS-EMPATHY-RESPECT

Malpractice Policy

Policy Updated by:	Grace Speakman
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Ratified by:	Rachel Pilling
Review due:	September 2027

Purpose and scope

Safe Start School prevents, identifies and reports malpractice and maladministration before, during and after examinations and assessments. This policy covers candidates, staff, contractors, invigilators, assessors and others involved in the school's GCSE, Functional Skills, Entry Level Certificate and NCFE qualifications, including post-16.

The school follows current JCQ regulations where applicable and each awarding body's qualification-specific requirements. Externally assessed examinations, NEA, internally assessed work, moderation, internal quality assurance and certification are included. The Exams Officer maintains a qualification register showing the applicable rules and reporting routes.

Definitions

Malpractice is an act, omission or practice that breaches assessment regulations and may compromise a qualification's integrity. Maladministration includes failure to follow required administrative procedures, whether deliberate or accidental. An allegation is not a finding of wrongdoing; a lack of deliberate intent does not mean a breach can be ignored.

Responsibilities

The Head of Centre, Kate Collins, ensures prevention, required immediate notification, independent oversight, cooperation with investigations and corrective action. The Exams Officer, Jennifer Byrne, secures records and evidence, coordinates reporting and maintains a confidential case log. Teachers, assessors, IQAs, invigilators and facilitators follow the rules and report concerns immediately.

Where the Head of Centre is implicated, staff use an uninvolved proprietor or director and contact the relevant awarding body directly as required. Where the Exams Officer is implicated, an uninvolved senior leader takes over the administrative role. No person implicated in the allegation may control its investigation, authorisation or appeal.

Prevention and information

Staff briefing. The Exams Officer will brief all relevant staff, including teachers, assessors, internal quality assurers and invigilators, at least once each academic year and before any new staff member undertakes examination or assessment duties. The briefing will cover this policy, assessment security, supervision, permitted assistance, authentication, conflicts of interest and the duty to report suspected malpractice immediately. It will also explain when AI is permitted, how candidates must acknowledge it, how staff check that work is the candidate's own and what staff must do if they suspect misuse. Staff will receive further guidance if the rules for an assessment change.

Candidate briefing. At least once each academic year, the Exams Officer will ensure candidates receive an accessible briefing on this policy and the relevant JCQ Information for Candidates. Before written exams, candidates will be reminded about unauthorised items, including phones, smartwatches and notes, and about the rules on sharing exam content. Before coursework, non-examination assessment or other assessed work begins, the teacher or assessor will explain the rules for that task, including independent work, permitted help, referencing, AI use and what counts as misuse. Candidates will be reminded of these rules before signing any authentication declaration.

Staff will use accessible formats and check understanding where appropriate, including through examples or asking candidates to explain the rules in their own words. The Exams Officer will

keep a record of briefing dates, who received the information, the materials used and any catch-up briefings.

The Head of Centre ensures sufficient trained staff, secure storage and suitable resources. Staff declare conflicts and follow the Exam Conflict of Interest Policy. The Exams Officer records the rules for each qualification and checks reporting contacts and forms before each series.

Examples of malpractice

Candidate examples include plagiarism, collusion, impersonation, fabricated evidence, false authentication, prohibited assistance, unacknowledged or prohibited AI use, unauthorised devices or notes, and sharing live assessment content.

Staff examples include prohibited prompts, altering work, improper marking, falsified entries or access evidence, insecure handling of materials, omitted IQA, failure to declare conflicts, failure to report concerns and obstruction of an investigation.

These are examples, not an exhaustive list. Misconduct or errors by staff as well as candidates must be considered.

Reporting and preserving evidence

All staff must report alleged, suspected or actual malpractice or maladministration immediately to the Head of Centre and Exams Officer, or the independent route above. Candidates and families may raise concerns with either role. The Head of Centre immediately notifies the awarding body wherever reporting is required; staff must not wait for an internal hearing or final proof.

Secure relevant work, original electronic files, drafts, source and AI records, logs, communications and witness accounts. Record the time, assessment, candidate and factual concern. Do not edit evidence, circulate it unnecessarily or conduct informal interviews that could compromise the awarding body's process. Immediate safeguarding or security action is taken alongside reporting.

Before and after authentication

For JCQ qualifications, the limited exception for content-related candidate offences discovered in controlled assessment, coursework or NEA before the candidate signs authentication is applied only within the current rules. Such cases are managed under the school's internal process: preserve the evidence, explain the issue, provide referencing and authenticity guidance, and arrange only a remedy the specification permits. Teachers must not accept or authenticate work that is not the candidate's own.

Breaches of assessment conditions, unauthorised materials, staff malpractice and other reportable concerns are not covered by that exception. Candidate malpractice discovered after signed authentication is reported as required. The Head of Centre checks the actual offence and current awarding-body rules rather than using "unsigned" as a blanket reason not to report.

For NCFE qualifications, its policy permits coursework plagiarism or AI misuse discovered before candidate authentication to be managed internally, with evidence of that handling retained. Other reportable suspected or actual malpractice is notified immediately. The Head of Centre checks the exact exception and seeks written advice if uncertain, without delaying a required report.

Investigations

The Head of Centre follows awarding-body instructions for evidence gathering and investigation. Current JCQ M1 is used for relevant candidate cases, M2 for staff notification and M3 for a requested staff investigation report, or the awarding body's own route as directed. Records show when notifications were made and what instructions followed.

Any centre investigation must be impartial, proportionate and documented. The person concerned is told the allegation and has an appropriate opportunity to respond in accordance with the applicable procedure. Relevant rights, support and appeal information are explained. The school cooperates with external requests and does not promise confidentiality that would prevent required disclosure.

SEND and safeguarding

Candidates receive accessible explanations, communication support and permitted adjustments during the process. Staff consider understanding, disability-related barriers and relevant context without presuming guilt or excusing a mandatory report. Support must preserve the integrity of evidence. Safeguarding concerns are referred to the DSL alongside examination reporting.

AI and assessment integrity

Candidates may use AI in an examination or assessment only where the awarding body and the instructions for that task permit it. Teachers and assessors will explain the limits for each task before candidates start. Work submitted for assessment must demonstrate the candidate's own knowledge, skills and independent thinking.

Where AI use is permitted and used, candidates must identify the AI tool, record the date the content was generated and briefly explain how they used it. They must keep a copy of the prompts and the AI-generated output in a non-editable format, such as screenshots, and submit this evidence with their work so the teacher or assessor can review it. If the AI tool identifies sources, candidates must verify and reference those sources in the usual way.

AI misuse is malpractice. Examples include using AI where it is prohibited, failing to acknowledge AI use properly, and submitting AI-generated or AI-rewritten material in a way that misrepresents the candidate's own work. Acknowledging AI use does not make prohibited use acceptable.

Teachers and assessors will check authenticity using evidence such as supervised work, drafts, source records and discussions with the candidate. An AI detection score alone is insufficient to establish misuse. Where staff suspect misuse, they must preserve the evidence and report the concern immediately under this policy. Staff must only authenticate work they are satisfied is the candidate's own. The Head of Centre will determine the appropriate internal or awarding body route under the applicable rules, including the rules on whether the candidate has signed the authentication declaration.

Teachers and assessors remain responsible for the full assessment decision. AI must not be used as the sole or primary means of marking a candidate's work.

Outcomes and appeals

The school implements awarding-body decisions and any required correction, training or security improvements. Only the awarding body determines qualification sanctions within its jurisdiction. School behaviour or employment procedures may apply separately; they do not replace reporting or external appeal rights.

Candidates and staff are informed of outcomes and applicable appeal routes. Challenges to centre assessment decisions or rejection of unauthenticated work follow the Exam and Internal Appeals Policy. Appeals against awarding-body malpractice findings or sanctions follow the body's published grounds, eligible appellant route and deadline. Internal candidates normally act through the Head of Centre; staff may have a direct external appeal right under the applicable rules.

Records and monitoring

The Exams Officer maintains a secure case log covering the concern, evidence, authentication status, conflict checks, notifications, instructions, investigation, outcome, appeal and corrective action. Access is restricted. Records are retained for the awarding-body period and school retention schedule, and longer while a case, appeal or legal hold remains open.

The Head of Centre reviews incidents, recurring errors and the effectiveness of prevention, and assigns named actions and deadlines. All staff are reminded that failure to report may itself constitute malpractice.

The Head of Centre will assign a member of the senior leadership team to review this policy at least annually and update it where necessary. The policy will also be reviewed when relevant JCQ or awarding body requirements change. The cover page will record who completed the review, the date of review, who ratified the policy and the next review date.

Related policies and guidance

Read with the Artificial Intelligence Policy, Non-Examination Assessment Policy, Exam and Internal Appeals Policy, Exam Conflict of Interest Policy, Examinations Policy and the school's Safeguarding, Whistleblowing, Data Protection and Cyber Response arrangements.

- JCQ *Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures*, current edition, and the associated reporting forms.
- JCQ *AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications*, current edition.
- JCQ *Information for Candidates*, relevant to the examination or assessment.
- NCFE Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

The Exams Officer checks the current qualification instructions, evidence requirements and forms before reporting. Appendix A may be used for the internal record but does not replace an external form.

Appendix A Malpractice incident record

Complete factually and store securely. Use continuation pages where needed. Do not delay an immediate report while completing this record.

Date and time of incident

Qualification and awarding body

Candidate and assessment component

Person reporting and role

People involved and relevant relationship or conflict

Concern and factual source of information

Immediate safeguarding or security action

Authentication signed and date or status checked

Evidence preserved and secure location

Head of Centre or independent leader notified and time

Awarding body notified and time or recorded basis for internal handling

Reference and instructions received

Investigation lead and conflict check

Outcome and candidate or staff communication

Appeal route and deadline communicated

Corrective actions and responsible person

Closure date and retention requirement