



Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy

Review frequency:	Annual
Last reviewed:	May 23
Agreed by Trustees	22/5/23
Next review date:	May 24

Confidential Reporting Procedure (“Whistleblowing”)

Introduction

The Academy Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's or trust's work to come forward and voice those concerns.

This procedure makes it clear that you can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. It is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious problems within the school rather than overlooking a problem or "blowing the whistle" outside.

This procedure has been discussed with the relevant trade unions and professional organisations and has their support.

The Board of Trustees has appointed a Trustee with specific responsibility for this procedure. The responsible Trustee is **Mr Alan Honeybone – (email: honeybone6@aol.com)**

Aims and Scope of this Procedure

This procedure aims to:

- encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
- provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied
- reassure you that you will be protected from possible victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in good faith.

The procedure is intended to supplement, rather than to replace, the existing complaints, disciplinary and grievance procedures. It is intended to cover serious concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures and may relate to something which:

- is against Trust's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and policies
- is against the School's policies and procedures, or
- falls below established standards of practice, or
- amounts to improper conduct, including something you believe may be:
 - against the law
 - a Health and Safety risk
 - damaging to the environment
 - misuse of public money

- corruption or unethical conduct
- abuse of clients or service users

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made to protect your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to provide a statement or act as a witness and will be expected to co-operate fully with the investigation and disclose all relevant information.

Anonymous Allegations

This procedure encourages you to put your name to your concern as anonymous allegations may often be difficult to substantiate/prove.

Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be investigated unless the Trust's Monitoring Trustee in consultation with the Chair of Trustees agrees there is insufficient evidence to proceed.

Untrue Allegations

If you raise a concern in good faith, but it is not subsequently confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

How to Raise a Concern

As a first step you should normally raise concerns with your line manager and inform him/her you are using this procedure. However, the Trustees recognise that on occasion this may not be appropriate.

A number of alternative contacts may be appropriate depending on the nature of the concern. For example, you could approach a more senior manager in the school such as the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher or any other Governor or Trustee. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing.

Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of your concerns, you will need to demonstrate that you have reasonable grounds to raise them.

Where employees fail to report their concerns they may become themselves implicated and consequently the Trustees may treat failure by an employee to report such matters as a serious matter which could lead to disciplinary action.

You may wish to obtain assistance in putting forward your concern from the Academy's HR advisers (Browne Jacobson), a Trade Union representative or a colleague. You may choose to be represented by a Trade Union representative or colleague at any meetings which are required.

How the Trustees will respond

In order to protect individuals and the Trustees initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within

the scope of specific procedures (for example Child Protection issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

The person with whom you have raised your concern will inform the relevant Trustee of the facts. The Trustee will write to you, within ten working days with the following:

- acknowledgement that the concern has been received
- an indication of how the concern will be dealt with
- an estimate of how long it will take to provide a full response
- whether any initial enquiries have been made
- whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.

The Trustees will inform you in writing of the outcome of any investigation, or any action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law.

The Responsible Officer

The Trust's Monitoring Trustee has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy within the schools. That Trustee will ensure that the school maintains a record of concerns raised along with the outcomes and will report as necessary to the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The recording and reporting procedure will be in a form which ensures your confidentiality.

How the matter can be taken further

This policy is intended to provide you with a route within school to pass on your concerns /make a disclosure of malpractice. The trust's hope is that you will be satisfied with the action they take and that in most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

As stated above, the law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concern to an external body such as a regulator. If you do wish to report a concern externally, a list of prescribed people and bodies can be found at the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies#education>, and includes:

- Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills
- Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)
- Secretary of State for Education

You may also wish to report concerns externally to:

- Protect
- NSPCC Whistleblowing helpline
- The External Auditor
- Ofsted
- The Police

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (safeguarding concerns)
- Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

You should make sure that you choose the correct person or body for your specific issue where applicable. If you do take the matter outside of the school you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information. We strongly encourage that you seek advice before reporting a concern externally to ensure that you are aware of any additional requirements that could potentially apply.

Contact details are in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

Useful Contact Details:

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work): An independent charity whose lawyers are available to give you free confidential advice at any point in the process. Helpline: 020 3117 2520 or

<https://protect-advice.org.uk/>.

NSPCC Whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally.

www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/

Staff can call 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 08.00 am to 08.00 pm, Monday to Friday and email

help@nspcc.org.uk,

The External Auditor: Francis Clark LLP - (0)1872 276477

Your trade union

- National Education Union (NEU) Tel: 0345 811 8111
- National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) Tel: 0300 30 30 333
- Unison Tel: 0800 0 857 857
- Unite: <https://unitetheunion.org/>
- Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Tel: 0116 2991 122
- The Teachers Union (NASUWT) Tel: 03330 145550

Ofsted: Tel: 0300 123 1231 or www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Police: 999 or non-emergency 101

Local Authority Designated Officer LADO (safeguarding concerns) 01872 326536.

www.safechildren-cios.co.uk/health-and-social-care/childrens-services/cornwall-and-isles-of-scilly-safeguarding-children-partnership/working-together/professional-allegations-lado/

Education & Skills Funding Agency:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy>.

Further Information:

Freedom to Speak Report: <http://freedomtospeakup.org.uk/>

School complaints and whistleblowing:

<https://www.gov.uk/education/school-complaints-and-whistleblowing>

Whistleblowing for employees: www.gov.uk/whistleblowing

ACAS Whistleblowing advice: <https://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1919>