



Whistleblowing Policy

Author/s	Heads of School
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Introduction

Employees have a responsibility to ensure that they, their colleagues and others working in the Academy follow safe working practices so that students are kept safe at all times. Employees must also understand that they have a duty to report unsafe practices that could lead to a child being harmed or put at risk of harm. Failure to report such practices may lead to disciplinary action being taken against them if, as a result of the failure to report, a child is harmed or put at risk of harm.

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the Academy. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the Academy. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In the circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

The Board of Directors of the Academy are committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability. In line with that commitment, we encourage employees, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Academy's work or a colleague, to come forward and voice those concerns.

It is recognised that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. This policy document makes it clear that staff can do so without fear of reprisals. This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable staff of the school to raise serious concerns within the school rather than overlooking a problem or discussing it externally.

Aims and scope of the policy

This policy aims to:

- give confidence to members of staff about raising concerns about conduct or practice which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice or is inconsistent with school standards and policies so that they are encouraged to act on those concerns
- provide members of staff with avenues to raise concerns
- ensure that members of staff receive a response to the concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken
- reassure members of staff that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith.

Concerns to be reported under this policy may relate to something that:

- is unlawful
- is against the Academy's full range of policies
- falls below established standards or practice
- amounts to improper conduct



Safeguards

Harassment or victimisation

The Academy 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 malpractice. The Academy will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect anyone raising a concern in good faith.

If an employee is the subject of disciplinary or redundancy/non-renewal of contract procedures when they raise their concerns, then those procedures will not automatically be affected. The information provided would be assessed in the light of the new circumstances and a decision taken as to how, if at all, those proceedings should be affected.

Where feasible, you will be contacted when your concern has been investigated to ascertain whether you have suffered any detriment as a result of your whistleblowing. If at any time, either during or after the investigation, you feel that you have suffered any detriment as a result of your whistleblowing you should contact the Principal. If the whistleblowing regards the Principal, it should be reported to the Chair of the Board of Directors.

Confidentiality

The Academy treats the details of all whistleblowers in confidence and will do its best not to divulge your identity. However, it must be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information without us revealing your identity directly, and a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence.

Anonymous allegations

Allegations can be made anonymously. However, this policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation, as concerns expressed anonymously are often much more difficult to investigate. For example, we may need to contact you to obtain further information or verify the details you have already given us.

Anonymous allegations will be considered wherever possible at the discretion of the Academy. The factors to be taken into account when determining whether an investigation in such a case can proceed would include the:

- seriousness of the issues raised
- credibility of the concern; and
- likelihood of confirming the allegation from other, attributable sources

Untrue allegations

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make malicious or vexatious allegations, appropriate action may be taken against you, up to and including termination of employment.

Procedures

How to raise a concern if you believe that a member of staff has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children

If there is any reason to believe that another member of staff or volunteer has acted inappropriately you must take action by discussing your belief or concern with the **Principal** straight away. Even though it may seem difficult to believe that one of your colleagues may be unsuitable to work with children, the risk is far too serious for any member of staff to dismiss such a suspicion without taking action.



If the concern is about the **Principal**, it should be discussed with the Chair of the Board of Directors, without including the Principal first.

Although you are not expected to prove an allegation, you will need to demonstrate that there are sufficient grounds for your concern.

Concerns are best raised in writing. You should set out the background and history of the concerns, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reasons why you are particularly concerned about the situation. If you do not feel able to put the concern in writing, you should telephone or meet the appropriate person. It is important that, however the concern is raised, you must make it clear that you are raising the issue via the whistleblowing procedure.

How the Academy will respond

The action taken by the Academy will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may be:

1. Resolved without the need for investigation;
2. Investigated internally;
3. Referred to the police;
4. Referred to the Ministry;
5. Refer to relevant Embassy
6. Report to the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) / TRA (Teaching Regulations Agency) for staff from the UK

In order to protect individuals and the Academy, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, Safeguarding Policy) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

Within ten working days of a concern being received, where appropriate, the Academy will write to you:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how it proposes to deal with the matter (including potential timescales)
- informing you whether any initial enquiries have been made; and
- advising you whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

The amount of contact between the person(s) considering the issues and you will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from you.

When any meeting is arranged, you have the right, if you wish, to be accompanied by a colleague who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

The Academy acknowledges the need to provide you with assurance that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal and confidential constraints, you will receive appropriate information about the extent and outcomes of any investigations.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal has overall responsibility for:

- maintaining and operating the policy
- annual review of the policy
- annual report on the effectiveness of the policy to the Board of Directors
- approving amendments to the policy
- promoting the policy periodically - annually at start of the academic year as a part of Safeguarding/Child Protection training
- maintaining a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form that does not endanger your confidentiality)



The Board of Directors

- to review the policy
- to be given updates on whistleblowing matters
- To be involved directly if the concern is about the Principal

Line Managers

- to undertake investigations without undue delay
- to maintain confidentiality
- to assist the Principal in the above

Employees

- to raise issues of concern responsibly

Others

As an employee of a contractor of the school or a partner organisation, it is recognised that in some cases, you may have concerns which you may want to bring to our attention. The Academy is committed to encouraging all individuals, including non-school employees to raise serious concerns with the organisation. Whilst we would always seek to protect the anonymity of individuals raising concerns in good faith, the Whistleblowing Policy does not protect employees of external organisations in the same way as school employees.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following supporting policies:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy