



INSPIRE

Connected Communities Trust

Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure



Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

The Trust is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and expects all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with their contractual obligations and the Trust's policies and procedures.

However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

The aims of this policy are:

- To encourage individuals to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected;
- to let all staff know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the Trust
- To set clear procedures for how the Trust will respond to such concerns
- To let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing concern;
- to assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue)

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and is not intended to have contractual effect. It is provided for guidance to all members of staff at the Trust and the Trust reserves the right to amend its content at any time. This policy reflects the Trust's current practices and applies to all individuals working at all levels of the organisation, including the Headteacher (Executive Head), Heads of schools, Teaching and Learning Leaders, members of the Senior Leadership Group, Officers, Directors (trustees), employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, home-workers, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff (collectively referred to as "Staff" in this policy) who are advised to familiarise themselves with its content.

Legislation

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the Academy Trust Handbook.

This policy is written in line with the above document, as well as government guidance on whistle-blowing. We have also taken into account the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.



What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- criminal activity
- child protection and/or safeguarding concerns
- miscarriages of justice
- danger to health and safety
- damage to the environment;
- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- financial fraud or mismanagement
- negligence
- breach of our internal policies and procedures including our Code of Conduct
- conduct likely to damage the Trust's reputation
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern that they believe is in the public interest relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the Trust's activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to Staff's own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases, you should use the Grievance Policy and Procedure or Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy as appropriate.

If Staff are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Headteacher.

Raising a whistle-blowing concern

The Trust hopes that in many cases individuals will be able to raise any concerns with their Team Leader and/or Headteacher, speaking to them in person or putting the matter in writing if they prefer. A resolution to any concerns may be agreed. In some cases, the matter may be referred to the Governing Body.

However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your Line Manager/Headteacher has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact one of the following:

- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
or, if your concerns relate to the CEO:
- A Governor / Director with responsibility for Whistleblowing matters: Trust Board Chair, Mr D Rhodes – please contact through the Clerk

The Trust will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. Staff may bring a colleague or trade union representative to any meetings under this policy who must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.



The Trust will take down a written summary of the concern raised and provide the member of the staff with a copy as soon as practicable after the meeting. The Trust will also aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

Confidentiality

The Trust hopes that Staff will feel able to voice whistle blowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if a member of staff wants to raise his or her concern confidentially, the Trust will endeavour to keep his or her identity secret in so far as it is possible to do so when following this policy and procedure. If it is necessary for anyone

investigating that member of staff's concern to know your identity, the Trust will discuss this with the member of staff first.

The Trust does not encourage Staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if the Trust cannot obtain further information. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible and have been made in good faith. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to one of the contacts listed above and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality.

If you are in any doubt, you can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are:

Public Concern at Work
(Independent whistleblowing
charity)

Helpline: (020)3117 2520
E-mail: whistle@pcaw.co.uk
Website: www.pcaw.co.uk

External Disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases Staff should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for Staff to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern.

Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of Trust Staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a service provider. The law allows Staff to raise a concern in good faith with a third party, where the member of staff reasonably believes it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. However, Staff are encouraged to report such concerns internally first. Staff should contact one of the other individuals set out above for guidance.



Investigation and Outcome

Once a member of Staff has raised a concern, the Trust will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. The Trust will inform you of the outcome of its assessment. The member of staff raising the concern may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

In some cases, the Trust may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable the Trust to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

The Trust will aim to keep the member of staff informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent the Trust from giving specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The member of staff is required to treat any information about the investigation as strictly confidential.

If the Trust concludes that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Whilst the Trust cannot always guarantee the outcome a particular member of staff is seeking, the Trust will try to deal with the concern fairly and in an appropriate way. If a member of staff is not happy with the way in which his or her concern has been handled, he or she can raise it with one of the other key contacts outlined above.

Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern. If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

Escalating concerns beyond the trust

The trust encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#).

Protection and Support for Whistleblowers

It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. The Trust aims to encourage openness and will support Staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment



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connected with raising a concern. If a member of staff believes that he or she has suffered any such treatment, he or she should inform the Headteacher immediately. If the matter is not remedied the member of staff should raise it formally using the Trust's Grievance Policy and Procedure.

Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

All Staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved. Comments, suggestions and queries should be addressed to the CEO in the first instance.

Approval

This policy will be reviewed every **two years and will be approved by the board of Trustees.**