



Whitburn Church of England Academy

Whistleblowing policy

Schedule 5 – staff handbook

(Approved by the Governing Body on 21st March 2023 – copy taken from the internal HR Staff Handbook)

1. About this policy

- 1.1. We are committed to running the School with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain high standards. However, all schools 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 in order to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur.
- 1.2. The aims of this policy are:
 - 1.2.1. To encourage staff 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.
 - 1.2.2. To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.
 - 1.2.3. To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 1.3. This policy covers all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, casual workers and agency workers.
- 1.4. The Governors has overall responsibility for this policy, including keeping it under review.
- 1.5. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

2. Personnel responsible for the policy

- 2.1. The Governors have overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.
- 2.2. The Senior Deputy Headteacher (the "Whistleblowing Officer") has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, and should ensure that all managers and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training.
- 2.3. 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 Whistleblowing Officer.
- 2.4. Staff will be made aware of this policy through the annual staff INSET, induction and via the staffroom noticeboard

3. What is whistleblowing?

- 3.1. Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:
 - 3.1.1. criminal activity;
 - 3.1.2. failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
 - 3.1.3. miscarriages of justice;
 - 3.1.4. danger to health and safety;
 - 3.1.5. damage to the environment;
 - 3.1.6. bribery;
 - 3.1.7. facilitating tax evasion;
 - 3.1.8. financial fraud or mismanagement;
 - 3.1.9. breach of our internal policies and procedures;
 - 3.1.10. conduct likely to damage our reputation or financial wellbeing;
 - 3.1.11. unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
 - 3.1.12. negligence;
 - 3.1.13. the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.
 - 3.1.14. Safeguarding concerns
- 3.2. In addition the policy may cover breaches of school policy and codes of conduct or good practice; any misuse of Academy assets; discrimination or other inappropriate behaviour to others, such as pupils, parents or contractors; abuse of power, position or authority, where there is no other more appropriate policy relevant to the concerns being reported by the employee. Therefore the policy is to be used alongside other policies and procedures.
- 3.3. A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.
- 3.4. This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases you should use the Grievance Procedure.
- 3.5. If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Whistleblowing Officer, whose contact details are at the end of this policy.

4. Raising a whistleblowing concern

- 4.1. We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your manager. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. In some cases they may refer the matter to the Whistleblowing Officer.
- 4.2. However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your manager has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact one of the following:
 - 4.2.1. The Whistleblowing Officer
 - 4.2.2. The Principal
 - 4.2.3. Should your concern relate to the Whistleblowing Officer or the Principal then please raise your concern with the Chair / Vice Chair of the Governing Body

Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

- 4.3. We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.
- 4.4. We will take down a written summary of your concern and provide you with a copy after the meeting. We will also aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

5. Confidentiality

- 5.1 We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. However, this may not always be possible depending upon the nature of the concern. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.
- 5.2 We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the Whistleblowing Officer or one of the other contact points listed in paragraph 6 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 at the end of this policy.

6. Investigation and outcome

- 6.1. An employee is not required to have evidence to prove, beyond reasonable doubt, the truth of a concern. However, they must show they have reasonable and genuine grounds for the concern and are acting in good faith and in the interests of the Academy. In such cases the Academy will offer the employee support and not allow victimisation or harassment of the employee. However where a concern is found to have been made in bad faith or maliciously it is likely to result in disciplinary action.
- 6.2. The line manager (or other person receiving the concern) must:
 - Make a written signed account of the concern.
 - Ensure it is dealt with confidentially, so far as is possible in the circumstances.
 - Carry out enquiries promptly, obtaining all relevant documentation. Any person investigating a concern will have full right of access to all Academy records and documents.
- 6.3. Recommend appropriate action to resolve the concern and advise the person voicing the concern. Once you have raised a concern, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.
- 6.4. In some cases we 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 us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.
- 6.5. We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.
- 6.6. If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action and they may potentially be dismissed by reason of gross misconduct.

7. If you are not satisfied

- 7.1. While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy you can help us to achieve this.
- 7.2. If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with one of the other key contacts in paragraph 3.5. Alternatively you may contact the chair of the Governing Body. Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

8. External disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in school. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally. In the first instance these matters should be raised internally with the appropriate person. Disclosing information externally, for example via social media may compromise any investigation and potentially constitute a disciplinary matter.

- 8.1. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your 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. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.
- 8.2. Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as parents, volunteers, suppliers or service providers. In some circumstances the law will protect you if you raise the matter with the third party directly. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact your manager or the Principal or one of the other individuals set out in paragraph 3.5 for guidance.

9. Protection and support for whistleblowers

- 9.1. It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 9.2. Whistleblowers should not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Whistleblowing Officer immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.
- 9.3. You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action. In some cases the whistleblower could have a right to make a claim against you for compensation.
- 9.4. A confidential support and counselling hotline is available to whistleblowers who raise concerns under this policy. Their contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

10. **Contacts**

Whistleblowing Officer	NAME Miss D Smith TELEPHONE 0191 5293712
Principal	NAME Mr J Crowe TELEPHONE 0191 5293712
Chair of Governors	NAME Mrs A Tobin TELEPHONE 0191 5293712
Public Concern at Work (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: (020) 7404 6609 E-mail: whistle@pcaw.co.uk Website: www.pcaw.co.uk