



Whitefield
Academy Trust

**Policy
Document**

Whistleblowing Policy

Category: Leadership

Key Elements

This policy has been established to set out a framework to allow genuine concerns to be raised confidentially and investigated thoroughly and to ensure that members of staff who raise concerns receive a response.

Adopted on:
September 2020

Agreed by:
CEO

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July 2022



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1. Introduction

This policy applies to all staff employed by the Whitefield Academy Trust and to all other adults supporting the work of the Trust on any of its sites.

The Directors and Senior Leadership Teams recognise their duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children and young people within the Trust, many of whom are deemed particularly vulnerable. They further expect the highest standards of conduct from all members of the WAT community and treat very seriously any concern raised about illegal or improper conduct or any breach of Trust policy, Code of Conduct or ethical standards.

The Trust is committed to work within a climate of trust so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with full confidence that they will not be penalised for doing so and that a proper investigation will take place.

2. Aims and principles

This policy has been established to set out a framework to allow genuine concerns to be raised confidentially and investigated thoroughly and to ensure that members of staff who raise concerns receive a response. The Trust expects any member of staff who has a concern to raise it in a timely fashion through the appropriate channels. Concealing a wrongdoing, or instructing a colleague to do so, is in itself a disciplinary offence.

No member of staff will be penalised for using the policy and the Academy Trust will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of any member of staff who raises concerns.

Any concerns raised under this policy will be followed up with due sensitivity and regard for confidentiality and information shared only on a 'need to know' basis to support the investigation. Any member of staff who raises a concern under this policy will be expected to keep the matter confidential.

The policy has been written in line with London Safeguarding Board Procedures and follows 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2020)'.

It is in line with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Employment Rights Act 1998.

3. Scope of the policy

The Whistleblowing Policy covers situations where a member of staff believes that any of the following has been, or is about to be committed by another member of staff:

- an act which harms a child or young person or puts them at risk of harm
- a criminal offence
- a breach of the Academy Trust's legal duties
- an act which creates a risk to health and safety
- unauthorised or inappropriate use of public funds



- corruption or fraud
- allowing private interests to override the interests of the school or any member of the Academy Trust community
- failure to make every effort to ensure that children and young people experience high quality teaching and learning
- other conduct which falls below the high standards which the Trust expects of all members of its community

The concern may relate to a member of staff at any level in the Trust, including those more senior to the person who holds the concern.

It is not necessary for the member of staff to have proof but they must have a reasonable belief that any of the situations above has occurred. This policy cannot be used to follow up personal opinion, gossip or rumour. Using the Whistleblowing Policy maliciously will be a disciplinary issue.

The Whistleblowing Policy does not apply to situations where a member of staff believes that they have personally been treated unfairly and/or the terms of their contract have been broken; in these circumstances they should follow the Grievance Policy.

Any disclosure made under the Whistleblowing Policy which suggests that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm will be dealt with within the Trust's Safeguarding Policy and if appropriate with support from the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Any disclosure made under the Whistleblowing Policy which is shown on investigation to involve misconduct will be followed up within the Trust's Disciplinary Policy.

4. Safeguarding Concerns

If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to believe that another member of staff poses a risk to any child or young person or is not a fit person to work with children and young people, **they must immediately share their concerns and the reasons for them with the Headteacher, Principal or Chief Executive Officer**, who will follow up such matter under the Safeguarding Policy. The Local Authority Designated Officer for safeguarding will be informed if an allegation is made.

5. Procedure

A. Informal Stage

A number of channels exist for sharing concerns. Where concerns are raised at an early stage it is often possible to resolve them through advice and discussion before any serious harm is committed. In the first instance, therefore, a member of staff who has concerns about any aspect of the work of the school should consider whether it is appropriate to raise them through:

Whitefield Schools:

- discussion with their immediate line manager
- discussion at a school meeting



- discussion with a member of the senior leadership team
- using the 'ideas and concerns' section at the Whitefield Staff Council

Joseph Clarke School:

- discussion with their immediate line manager
- discussion at a departmental/school meeting
- discussion with a member of the senior leadership team

If the member of staff considers that the issue is too serious or urgent to raise through any of the above channels or if using the above channels has not produced the desired improvement, then he or she should move to the next step- see Section B.

B. Formal Stage

A member of staff who wishes to use the Whistleblowing Policy should raise their concerns with one of the following people, whom the Trust has identified as having sufficient experience and seniority to follow up such issues (see Appendix A for contact details):

- Heads of School at Whitefield
- Vice Principal of Whitefield/Deputy Head of Joseph Clarke School
- Chief Financial Officer, Whitefield Academy Trust
- Headteacher, Joseph Clarke School
- Principal, Whitefield School
- Chief Executive Officer, Whitefield Academy Trust
- Deputy Chair of Directors, Whitefield Academy Trust
- Chair of Directors, Whitefield Academy Trust

If the concerns relate to the Headteacher, Principal or Chief Executive Officer, the member of staff should approach one of the Directors named above, in person or by email- see Appendix.

The person approached will arrange an investigation into the concern (either investigating themselves or passing the issue to someone else in a senior role within the Trust). The person raising the concern may be asked to give a written statement and/or to meet with the investigating officer to explain their concerns more fully. The person about whom the concern has been raised will be given every opportunity to state their case both in writing and in a meeting with the investigating officer. The investigating officer may speak to other members of staff as appropriate and may ask to see any relevant documentation or other evidence which will help them to determine the facts of the matter and whether there is a case to answer. The Trust expects the investigating officer to carry out a robust investigation without fear or favour and to come to a conclusion on the balance of the evidence available to him or her.

A member of staff who wishes to use the Whistleblowing Policy may be supported by a Trade Union representative or a colleague, provided that the third party is not involved in the issue under investigation. The member(s) of staff about whom the concern has been raised may also be supported by a Trade Union representative or a colleague, provided that the third party is not involved in the issue under investigation.



Anonymous expressions of concern will be followed up as far as possible, but it is more difficult to carry out a robust investigation in these circumstances. The earlier and more open the expression of concern the easier it will be to take appropriate action.

C. Following up investigations

The investigating officer will make a written report to the Headteacher/Principal/CEO and Chair of Directors who will agree on the appropriate action. If disciplinary action is needed this will be taken forward by the Headteacher/ Principal or Chair of Directors as appropriate. The member of staff who raised the concern and the member of staff about whom the concern was raised will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and what the next steps will be. If no action is to be taken the reason for this will be explained. This information will be confirmed in writing.

If as a result of the investigation it appears that the member of staff bringing forward the concern was acting maliciously, this will be followed up within the school's Disciplinary Policy. A member of staff bringing forward a genuine concern, even if they prove to have been mistaken, will not be penalised in any way.

D. Further steps

If a member of staff believes that a proper investigation has not been carried out and/or that the matter has not been dealt with appropriately, he or she should put their concerns in writing to the Chair of Directors, who will follow up accordingly.

E. External bodies

If the member of staff is not satisfied with the Chair of Directors' response, the Chair of Directors will make them aware of ways to raise the matter externally. Depending on the issues raised, this may include:

- the Department for Education
- the LADO
- 'Public Concern at Work' (a charity which supports individuals and organisations to raise and manage serious concerns)
- a recognised Trade Union
- relevant regulatory organisations

Any member of staff taking this action must be aware of the need to avoid sharing confidential information.

Members of staff must not approach the media or use social media or allow other people to do so on their behalf.



Appendix -Contact Details for Whistleblowing

Elaine Smith (Head of Neils Chapman Secondary at Whitefield Schools)

- e.smith@whitefield.waltham.sch.uk

Joanne Sweeney (Head of Peter Turner Primary at Whitefield Schools)

- j.sweeney@whitefield.waltham.sch.uk

Marize Lawson (Head of Margaret Brearley at Whitefield Schools)

- m.lawson@whitefield.waltham.sch.uk

Evelina Dimopoulou (Vice Principal of Whitefield Schools)

- e.dimopoulou@whitefield.waltham.sch.uk

George Ansong (Chief Financial Officer, Whitefield Academy Trust)

- g.ansong@whitefield.waltham.sch.uk

Isobel Cox (Headteacher of Joseph Clarke School)

- isobel.cox@josephclarke.waltham.sch.uk

Chadia Fillai-Moutei (Deputy Headteacher of Joseph Clarke School)

- c.fillai-moutei@josephclarke.waltham.sch.uk

Lorraine Boyce (Deputy Headteacher of Joseph Clarke School)

- lorraine.boyce@josephclarke.waltham.sch.uk

Laura Pease (Principal of Whitefield Schools)

- l.pease@whitefield.waltham.sch.uk

Elaine Colquhoun (CEO, Whitefield Academy Trust)

- e.colquhoun@whitefield.waltham.sch.uk

Owen O'Regan (Chair of Governors, Joseph Clarke School)

- governors@whitefield.waltham.sch.uk

Michael Sweeney (Deputy Chair of Governors, Whitefield Academy Trust)

- governors@whitefield.waltham.sch.uk

Caroline Sheppard (Chair of Governors, Whitefield Schools & Chair of Directors, Whitefield Academy Trust)

- governors@whitefield.waltham.sch.uk



**This policy is available
via the school's shared drive.**