

# Whistleblowing Policy

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## Introduction

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The Whistleblowing Policy applies to all academies and places of work within The Spencer Academies Trust. The trustees, directors and employees of the Trust seek to undertake all aspects of the Trust business and professional delivery with full regard to high standards of conduct, honesty and integrity. The reporting of suspected wrongdoing or cause for concern is encouraged as part of ensuring that the trust meets this standard.

The Whistleblowing procedure acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially and provides for thorough and appropriate investigation as a necessary step toward resolution and continuous improvement of working practices.

The Spencer Academies Trust is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with the full confidence that the matter will be appropriately considered either within the academy environment or by recourse to an external party, for example the police.

The Whistleblowing policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

Whistleblowing complaints concerning the Principal, Executive Principal or the CEO will be managed in the case of the Principal or Executive Principal by the CEO or in the case of the CEO by the Chair of the Trust Board. Guidance on managing Whistleblowing procedures is available from the Trust HR Manager who must be consulted before commencing these procedures.

## Who is covered by the Whistleblowing policy?

The Whistleblowing policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of the Trust or trust academies, including but not limited to trustees, members of local governing bodies, senior managers, teachers, support staff, consultants, contractors, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers. Parents or members of the broader trust community may also raise concerns under the Whistleblowing policy.

## **What is Whistleblowing?**

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing, malpractice or dangers in relation to the Academy's activities concerning matters of public interest. This may include bribery, fraud, corruption or other criminal activity, miscarriages of justice, health and safety risks, damage to the environment and any breach of legal or professional obligations, manipulation of accounting records and finances, inappropriate use of academy assets or funds, decision making for personal gain, abuse of position, malpractice, or serious breaches of Trust processes which may advantage a particular party, for example tampering with tender documentation or failure to register a personal interest.

The Whistleblowing policy does not cover matters of a personal or general concern, or which are otherwise covered by the grievance, anti-bullying and harassment policies or trust complaints procedure.

## **Raising a concern**

Concerns should initially be raised with the Principal, Chair of the Local Governing Body, CEO or Chair of the Directors of the Trust. Contact details for this can be found on the trust and academy websites.

The Whistleblower should raise the matter in person, by telephone, or in written form marked 'private and confidential' and addressed to one of the above. Details of the matter raised should specify the nature of the concern, why it is believed to be true and include the background, history and relevant dates where possible.

## **How are concerns progressed?**

Depending on the nature of the matter raised, an appropriate investigating officer or officers will be appointed and will carry out a preliminary investigation supported by the Trust HR Manager and Head of Governance.

Investigation will seek to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and whether there is a need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice, or assistance. Reports of any safeguarding concerns will be managed in line with the local authority safeguarding procedures and may be appropriately disclosed to external authorities.

Where appropriate, a meeting will be offered to discuss concerns. The Whistleblower may be accompanied by a companion who may be a colleague or trade union representative. The companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officer or officers will consider how best to report the findings and what corrective action needs to be taken. Where appropriate, this may be in conjunction with the CEO, principal or directors, and may include some form of disciplinary action or third-party referral including but not limited to internal or external audit or police investigation.

The Whistleblower will be informed of the results of the investigation whether or not the concern has been substantiated. Where appropriate they will be informed of the action taken to remediate the concern. The matter will be notified to the directors and to the local governing body.

If the Whistleblower is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns should be raised with the investigating officer or officers, the CEO, Principal or chair of the local governing body.

## **Respecting confidentiality**

The Spencer Academies Trust will seek to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the Whistleblower wherever this may be possible. If an employee requests to raise their concern confidentially, this will be respected to the extent that proper investigation and resolution is not limited by confidentiality. In any circumstance the identity of the complainant will be disclosed to the investigating officer or officers.

## **External disclosures**

The purpose of the Whistleblowing policy is to provide an appropriate internal mechanism for the reporting, investigating and resolution of any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases individuals should not find it necessary to additionally alert external authorities: however, The Spencer Academies Trust recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate to report concerns to an external body such as a regulator. Public Concern at Work (an independent Whistleblowing charity) operates a confidential helpline for this purpose.

Contact details for the confidential helpline are:

- t: (020) 7404 6609
- e: [whistle@pcaw.co.uk](mailto:whistle@pcaw.co.uk)
- w: [www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk)

## **Protection and support for Whistleblowers**

The purpose of the Whistleblowing policy is to encourage resolution of concerns as part of a transparent and healthy working culture. Whether concerns are upheld or are found on consideration not to be substantive, any attempt to cause detriment to the Whistleblower or to prevent concerns being raised will not be tolerated.

Where this is the found to be case, any necessary disciplinary or corrective action appropriate to the circumstances will be considered. If a employee should believe that he or she has suffered any such treatment as the result of raising a grievance, they should inform the Principal or other appropriate contact immediately. If following this step, the employee feels the matter has not been remedied they may raise it formally using the trust Grievance Policy.

If the investigation concludes that a Whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the Whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action under the trust Disciplinary Policy.