



**WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

**Version 3**

**09/07/2021**

# Whistleblowing Policy



Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing in the workplace which is regarded as making a disclosure in the public interest. We actively encourage all personnel within our academies to report any serious concerns they may have about any aspect of Waveney Valley Academies Trust such as:

- health and safety concerns
- damage to academy environments
- a criminal offence that has taken place or is about to take place
- disobeying the law
- the covering up of a wrong doing
- the conduct of its personnel or others acting on behalf of the trust.

Academy personnel, agency staff, contractors and students on work experience are protected by law if they make a disclosure on any of the above, that is if they think what they are reporting is true, that they think they are telling the right person and if they believe their disclosure is in the public interest.

Where the concern relates to an individual's own employment, the Trust's Grievance Policy should be used. However, if the concern relates to something which is against the Trust's policies, falls below standards of practice or amounts to improper conduct then the procedures in this policy should be used.

We are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, integrity and accountability.

## Aims

- To encourage all Waveney Valley Academies Trust personnel to report any serious concerns about any aspect of the trust or the conduct of its personnel or others acting on behalf of the multi academy trust.

## Responsibilities

The **Trust Board**:

- has delegated powers and responsibilities to the Headteachers to ensure all academy personnel and academy volunteers are aware of and comply with this policy
- has responsibility for ensuring funding is in place to support this policy
- will act appropriately, depending on the nature of the concern.

The **Headteacher** will:

- report any concerns to the Chair of the Academy (School) Committee and Chair of the Trust Board
- ensure all academy personnel and volunteers are aware of and comply with this policy
- encourage all academy personnel to raise any concerns they have regarding actual or potential breaches of duty or a failure by the academy
- provide support for a member of staff who has raised a concern
- provide support for a member of staff against whom allegations have been made
- keep all parties informed of progress during any investigation

**Academy personnel** have a duty to speak out against and report any:

- criminal offence that has been committed, is being committed or is about to be committed
- person who has failed, is failing or is about to fail compliance with any legal obligation that they are subject to
- miscarriage of justice that has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur
- health and safety issue that has endangered, is endangering or is likely to endanger any person
- damage to the academy environment that has been committed, is being committed or is about to be committed

Trust Personnel have a duty to the trust not to disclose confidential information. However, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 this does not prevent an employee from seeking independent advice nor discussing their concern with the Public Concern at Work charity.

Reporting of any concerns can be directed to the line manager, the Headteacher, the Chair of the Academy (School) Committee, the Trust Board, the local authority, unions or associations, Ofsted, the Children's Commissioner, the NSPCC, or the whistleblowing charity Public Concern at Work.

Trust Personnel should raise the concern internally before contacting a public agency.

All trust personnel must be aware that all raised concerns are investigated and every effort is made to ensure confidentiality for all parties. When a concern has been raised the following procedure must be followed:

## Stage 1

- All concerns should be made in writing to their line manager who will then report it to the Headteacher within the academy or if the complaint concerns the Headteacher to the Chief Executive Officer.
- The person raising the concern may wish to receive help from the Trust or from their trade union representative and may be accompanied by a colleague or union representative at any future meetings.

## Stage 2

- Within 10 working days the person with whom the concern has been registered acknowledges receipt in writing
- The letter will state the following:
  - How the concern will be dealt with
  - How long it is likely to take to provide a final response
  - Information on employee support services.

## Stage 3

- After initial enquiries have been conducted, a decision will be made if an investigation should take place.
- The investigation will be either:
  - an internal investigation by an appropriately skilled and experienced individual, knowledgeable in the area concerned. This could be the Headteacher, the CEO, the COO, or an independent third party as appropriate
  - a referral to the police
  - the subject of an independent enquiry
  - a referral to an External Auditor or Ombudsman

## Stage 4

- The employee will be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation by Waveney Valley Academies Trust.
- The employee has the right to take their concern to an independent body if they feel it has not been addressed adequately.

## Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages employees to put their name to their concerns. Concerns expressed anonymously are less capable of being followed up effectively, but they will be considered.

In such circumstances the Waveney Valley Academies Trust will take the following factors into account when establishing the scope and depth of the investigation:

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

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