



Wigston Academies Trust

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY: VOLUNTARY

DATE APPROVED:	September 2024
APPROVED BY:	Executive Headteacher
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Signed by Executive Headteacher:

Date: September 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 We are committed to conducting the business of Wigston Academies Trust with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain high standards. 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 in order to prevent such situations occurring or 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; and
- 1.2.3** to reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

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

2 POLICY COVERAGE

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels within Wigston Academies Trust, including officers, trustees, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

3 DEFINING 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** miscarriages of justice;
- 3.1.3** danger to health and safety;
- 3.1.4** damage to the environment;
- 3.1.5** failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- 3.1.6** bribery;
- 3.1.7** financial fraud or mismanagement;
- 3.1.8** negligence;
- 3.1.9** breach of our internal policies and procedures;
- 3.1.10** conduct likely to damage to the Trust's reputation;
- 3.1.11** unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- 3.1.12** concerns about the harm or risk of harm to children;
- 3.1.13** the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

3.2 A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If a member of staff has any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the Trust's activities (a whistleblowing concern) they should report it under this policy.

3.3 This policy should not be used for complaints relating to one's own personal circumstances, such as the way a member of staff has been treated at work. In those cases they should use the Grievance Procedure Policy as appropriate.

3.4 If a member of staff is uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy they should seek advice from the Whistleblowing Officer, whose contact details are at the end of this policy.

4 RAISING A WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN

4.1 The hope that is that in many cases a member of staff will be able to raise any concerns with their line manager or Headteacher. Staff may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if they prefer. It may be possible to agree a way of resolving concerns quickly and effectively.

4.2 Where the matter is more serious, or a member of staff feels that their line manager or the Headteacher has not addressed their concern, or they prefer not to raise it with these colleagues for any reason, they should contact the Whistleblowing Officer.. If the matter relates to the Whistleblowing Officer, they should contact the Chair of Trustees of Wigston Academies Trust..

4.3 A meeting will be arranged within 5 working days to discuss a concern.. The whistleblower may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. This companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

4.4 A written summary of the concern will be taken at the meeting and the whistleblower will be provided with a copy after the meeting. The person running the meeting will also aim to give an indication of how they propose to deal with the matter.

5 CONFIDENTIALITY

5.1 The Trust hopes that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if they want to raise their concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep their identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know a colleague's identity, it will be discussed with the whistleblower.

5.2 The Trust discourages staff from making disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from them. 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 and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If a colleague is in any doubt then they can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

6 EXTERNAL DISCLOSURES

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

6.2 The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for a member of 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 colleagues to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, 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.

6.3 Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a supplier or service provider. In some circumstances the law will protect a member of staff if they decide to raise the matter with the third party directly. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact your line manager or one of the other individuals set out in paragraph 4 for guidance.

7 INVESTIGATION AND OUTCOME

7.1 Once a member of staff has raised a concern, the Trust will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform the whistleblower of the outcome of our assessment. They may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

7.2 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 us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

7.3 We will aim to keep the whistleblower informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. Any information about the investigation should be treated as confidential.

7.4 If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

8 RIGHT OF REDRESS

8.1 While we cannot always guarantee the outcome the whistleblower is seeking, we will try to deal with any concerns fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy colleagues can help us to achieve this.

8.2 If the member of staff are not happy with the way in which their concern has been handled, they can raise it with the Board of Trustees..

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 in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

9.2 Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If they believe that they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform the Whistleblowing Officer immediately. If the matter is not remedied they should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.

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

10 RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SUCCESS OF THIS POLICY

10.1 Wigston Academies Trust has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.

10.2 The Whistleblowing Officer has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, and must ensure that all managers and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training.

10.3 All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing.

11 CONTACTS

Whistleblowing Officer: Mark Mitchley – Executive Headteacher - 0116 2881228 -
mmitchley@wigstonmat.org

Pauline Munro– Trustee of Wigston Academies Trust – admin@wigstonacademy.org

Protect (Whistleblowing Charity) Tel: 020 3117 2520