



Whistleblowing Policy

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Document Change History

Date:	Version:	Description of Changes:
February 2024	3.0	Adoption of Beyond Schools Trust Policy

Mission Statement

“To nurture and develop all people in our Trust so that they reach their full potential academically, vocationally, and personally, including being positive role models for future generations in the community. We will achieve this by providing high quality values-based education that cultivates employability and life skills making our schools the first choice for young people, parents, carers, staff and employers.”

Values

The values of Respect, Excellence, Collaboration, Independence, Perseverance, Enjoyment, Leadership, Integrity and Care are central to everything we do at the Skills for Life Trust.

Statement of Equality

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated and that their confidentiality will be respected
- Let all staff in the Trust know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the Trust
- Set clear procedures for how the Trust will respond to such concerns
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistleblowing concern
- Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue)

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the Trust in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

2. Legislation

The requirement to have clear whistleblowing procedures in place is set out in the [Academy Trust Handbook](#).

This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as [government guidance on whistleblowing](#) and the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Definition of Whistleblowing

'Whistleblowing' covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistleblowing include (but aren't limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staffs' health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Damage to the environment

A 'Whistleblower' is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the Trust, or individual schools in the Trust, count as whistleblowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying, or harassment do not usually count as whistleblowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

When staff have a concern, they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

[Protect](#) (formerly Public Concern at Work) has [further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistleblowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure.

4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistleblowing concern

If the concern is not about the Headteacher, it should be reported to the Headteacher of the individual school and/or the named LGB governor with responsibility for Whistleblowing in the relevant school. If the concern is about the Headteacher of the school, it should go to the named LGB governor with responsibility for Whistleblowing at that school and the Skills for Life Trust's named Trustee with responsibility for Whistleblowing.

4.1 When to raise a concern?

Staff should consider the examples in section 3 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistleblowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or Trust procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

4.2 Who to report to?

School-based staff should report their concern to the Headteacher of the relevant school. If the concern is about the Headteacher of the school or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the LGB named governor with responsibility for Whistleblowing and/or the Skills for Life Trust's named Trustee with responsibility for Whistleblowing. Central team staff should report their concern to the CEO. If the concern is about the CEO or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the central team staff should report the concern to the Skills for Life Trust's named Trustee with responsibility for Whistleblowing.

4.3 How to raise the concern?

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

5. Trust procedure for responding to a whistleblowing concern

5.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the CEO/School Headteacher/named LGB governor/named Trustee (from here on referred to as the 'recipient'), they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting and record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistleblowing nature, the

recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure

- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken (see section 6 of this policy)
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation

If there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation:

- The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the CEO/Local Governing Body and/or Chair of Trustees, if appropriate.
- In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate, or report the matter to the police
- The person who raised the concern should be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps

5.2 Outcome of the investigation

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified and whether a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the CEO, Trustees, and other staff, if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

6. Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the Trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

7. Escalating concerns beyond the Trust

The Trust encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 4 of this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#).

The Protect advice line, linked to in section 3 of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

8. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff grievance policy
- Complaints procedure
- Child protection policy

9. Named LGB Governors and the Skills for Life Trust named Trustee

The named LGB Governor for each Skills for Life Trust school can be found in the Whistleblowing Procedures for each individual school.

Skills for Life Trust's named Trustee with responsibility for whistleblowing is **Mrs Jan Stephens**.

Equality Impact Assessment

Who is the policy or process intended for?	Pupils	Employees	Govs/ Trustees	Volunteers	Visitors
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Status of the policy or process:	New policy or process			Existing policy or process	
	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Analysis					
Protected Characteristic	Impact analysis			Explanation of impact analysis	
	Positive	Neutral	Negative		
Age:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Disability:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Sex:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Gender reassignment:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Race:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Religion or belief:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Sexual orientation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Marriage or civil partnership:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Pregnancy and maternity:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Pupil groups (PP/SEN/CLA):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Evaluation and decision making					
Summary of action taken:					
Final decision:					