

Gateway Academy



Whistle Blowing Policy

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AIMS AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and accessible procedure for raising concerns about suspected wrongdoing, malpractice, risks to health and safety, failures to comply with legal or regulatory requirements, or other matters which may be in the public interest.

The Academy is committed to maintaining high standards of honesty, integrity, accountability and safeguarding. The Academy encourages individuals to raise concerns as soon as possible where they reasonably believe that wrongdoing may have occurred, may be occurring or may occur in the future.

The Academy will ensure that concerns are taken seriously, considered objectively and responded to appropriately and fairly.

This policy aims to:

- encourage individuals to raise concerns at an early stage;
- ensure concerns are dealt with appropriately and, where necessary, investigated;
- provide clear information about how and with whom concerns can be raised;
- protect individuals from detriment, harassment or victimisation for raising legitimate concerns;
- ensure that concerns can be raised confidentially where possible;
- provide appropriate routes for raising concerns where the normal management route is inappropriate;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are dealt with promptly and through the appropriate safeguarding procedures; and
- ensure the Academy complies with applicable legislation, the Academy Trust Handbook and relevant Department for Education guidance.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be reviewed or amended by the Academy and/or Governing Board as appropriate.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees and, where appropriate, other individuals working for or on behalf of the Academy, including:

- teachers and support staff;
- agency and temporary workers;
- contractors and consultants;
- volunteers;
- trainees and apprentices;
- supply staff; and
- other individuals working within the Academy.

The statutory protection available to an individual will depend upon their legal status and the circumstances in which a disclosure is made.

The Academy expects all individuals working within the Academy to raise concerns where they reasonably believe that serious wrongdoing may be taking place.

WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?

Whistleblowing occurs when a worker raises information which they reasonably believe is in the public interest and which tends to show that certain types of wrongdoing have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur.

Under whistleblowing legislation, relevant types of wrongdoing include:

- the commission of a criminal offence;
- failure to comply with a legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- danger to the health or safety of any individual;
- damage to the environment;
- sexual harassment;
- deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above; and
- other matters falling within the statutory definition of a protected disclosure.

A person does not have to prove that wrongdoing has occurred before raising a concern.

The relevant consideration is whether the individual reasonably believes that the information tends to show wrongdoing and that raising the concern is in the public interest.

The fact that a concern is subsequently found to be unsubstantiated does not, in itself, mean that the person raising it has acted improperly.

Current government guidance confirms that workers may be protected from detriment or dismissal where the statutory requirements for a protected disclosure are met.

WHISTLEBLOWING AND PERSONAL GRIEVANCES

Whistleblowing is different from raising a personal grievance or complaint about an individual's own employment circumstances.

Matters which would normally be dealt with under another Academy procedure include:

- disagreement with an individual's pay or working arrangements;
- dissatisfaction with workload;
- disagreement with an appraisal or capability decision;
- interpersonal disputes;
- allegations of bullying or harassment which are solely personal to the individual;
- disagreement with a management decision; or
- other matters appropriately dealt with under the Academy's grievance, dignity at work, disciplinary, capability or other relevant procedure.

However, a matter may still constitute whistleblowing where it raises a wider public-interest concern.

For example, an allegation that a manager has treated one employee unfairly would normally be dealt with as a grievance. An allegation that management is systematically falsifying records affecting a number of employees, pupils or the operation of the Academy may raise a wider public-interest concern.

Where a concern contains both a personal grievance and information which may amount to a protected disclosure, the Academy will consider the whistleblowing element separately.

The Academy will not require an individual to use the grievance procedure instead of whistleblowing

where the concern may amount to a protected disclosure.

SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

Whistleblowing must not be used as a substitute for the Academy's safeguarding procedures.

The safety and welfare of children is the Academy's highest priority.

Any concern that a child may be at risk of harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation, or any concern about the safeguarding practice or conduct of a member of staff, volunteer, supply worker, contractor or other person working in the Academy, must be reported immediately in accordance with the Academy's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff should report safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL without delay.

Where the concern relates to:

- the DSL
- the Deputy DSL
- a CoHeadteacher
- a member of the senior leadership team
- another person to whom the concern would ordinarily be reported

the Academy's safeguarding procedures must be followed to ensure that the concern is escalated to an appropriate person.

Where appropriate, this may include contacting the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), children's social care, the police or another relevant statutory agency.

If a child is in immediate danger, staff should contact the emergency services by calling 999.

Current KCSIE 2026 guidance requires staff to act immediately on safeguarding concerns, report concerns to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay, and follow the school's child protection procedures. It also specifically addresses safeguarding concerns and allegations about staff, including supply staff, volunteers and contractors.

Where a member of staff believes they cannot raise a safeguarding concern internally, they may seek independent advice through the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line: 0800 028 0285.

WHO CAN RAISE A CONCERN?

A concern may be raised by any individual covered by this policy.

Individuals do not need to have proof that wrongdoing has occurred. However, they should provide as much factual information as reasonably possible.

A concern may relate to something that:

- has already happened
- is currently happening
- the individual reasonably believes is likely to happen

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

Individuals should normally raise a concern with their line manager in the first instance.

Where the concern relates to the line manager, or the individual does not feel able to raise the concern with their line manager, the concern may be raised with:

- the CoHeadteachers
- the Chair of the Governing Board
- the Academy's designated whistleblowing contact

The Academy will ensure that staff are informed of the current designated whistleblowing contacts.

Concerns should normally be made in writing where possible and should include:

- the nature of the concern
- relevant dates
- the people involved;
- any relevant documents or evidence
- any witnesses who may be able to provide relevant information
- any immediate risks or safeguarding concerns

However, a person will not be prevented from raising a concern because they are unable to provide a written statement.

ANONYMOUS CONCERNS

The Academy will accept anonymous whistleblowing concerns.

Anonymous concerns will be considered and investigated where appropriate.

However, anonymity may make it more difficult for the Academy to:

- obtain further information
- clarify the concern
- assess evidence
- protect the individual raising the concern
- provide feedback about the outcome

The Academy will not dismiss a concern solely because it has been raised anonymously.

Individuals wishing to remain anonymous may use:

Email: reportaworry@gateway-academy.co.uk

Where the Academy is able to identify the person making an anonymous disclosure, it will respect their request for anonymity wherever reasonably possible and lawful.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Academy will make every reasonable effort to protect the confidentiality of an individual's identity.

Information relating to a whistleblowing concern will be shared only where this is necessary and

appropriate.

However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in every circumstance.

There may be situations where information, including the identity of the person raising the concern, needs to be disclosed because of:

- a legal or regulatory requirement
- safeguarding responsibilities
- a criminal investigation
- police involvement
- court proceedings
- disciplinary proceedings
- the need to ensure a fair and effective investigation

Where it is reasonably practicable and lawful to do so, the individual will be informed before their identity is disclosed.

Nothing in this policy, or any other Academy policy or agreement, is intended to prevent an individual from making a protected disclosure where the law permits them to do so.

PROTECTION AGAINST DETRIMENT AND VICTIMISATION

The Academy will not tolerate harassment, victimisation or other detrimental treatment of an individual because they have raised a concern under this policy.

An individual who raises a concern that they reasonably believe is in the public interest and which meets the statutory requirements for a protected disclosure will have the protections provided by law.

Detriment may include, for example:

- harassment
- bullying
- intimidation
- unfair treatment
- inappropriate disciplinary action
- reduction in working hours
- exclusion from workplace opportunities
- other adverse treatment because the individual raised a concern

Any allegation that an individual has been subjected to detriment or victimisation because they raised a whistleblowing concern will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately.

An individual should report any suspected retaliation as soon as possible to the Academy's designated whistleblowing contact, the Chair of the Governing Board or the appropriate trustee contact.

SUPPORT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

The Academy recognises that raising concerns about wrongdoing can be stressful.

Where appropriate, the Academy will consider reasonable support for an individual who has raised a concern, which may include:

- access to a named contact
- appropriate welfare support
- access to the Academy's employee assistance programme, where available
- reasonable adjustments where appropriate
- signposting to an independent source of advice

An individual may also seek independent advice from a trade union, professional association or specialist whistleblowing organisation.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Upon receiving a whistleblowing concern, the Academy will acknowledge receipt promptly where the identity of the person raising the concern is known.

Normally, within 10 working days, the Academy will make initial contact with the individual to:

- clarify the nature of the concern
- obtain any further information
- establish whether immediate action is required
- determine whether the concern falls within this policy or another procedure
- consider what further action is appropriate

This timescale is not intended to delay action where the concern involves an immediate risk to a child, an individual, health and safety, evidence or the integrity of an investigation.

The individual may be accompanied at a meeting by a trade union representative or professional association representative where appropriate.

The Academy will not normally permit a companion to answer questions on behalf of the individual.

DECIDING HOW THE CONCERN WILL BE DEALT WITH

Following an initial assessment, the Academy will determine the most appropriate route for dealing with the concern.

This may include:

- a formal whistleblowing investigation
- a safeguarding investigation or referral
- a disciplinary investigation
- a financial investigation
- a grievance or other employment procedure
- referral to the police
- referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer
- referral to the Department for Education
- referral to another regulator or prescribed person
- another appropriate action

Where a concern contains more than one issue, different aspects may be dealt with under different procedures.

The Academy will explain the proposed route to the person raising the concern where it is appropriate and

lawful to do so.

INVESTIGATION

Where further investigation is required, an appropriate investigator will be appointed.

The investigator must be sufficiently independent and must not have an actual or perceived conflict of interest in relation to the concern.

A person who is the subject of the concern, or whose impartiality could reasonably be questioned, will not be responsible for determining the outcome of the investigation.

Depending on the nature of the concern, the Academy may appoint:

- an appropriately trained member of staff
- a senior leader from outside the Academy
- an external HR professional
- an independent investigator
- an external safeguarding professional
- an auditor
- legal advisers
- another appropriate specialist

The investigation may include:

- reviewing documents and records
- interviewing relevant individuals
- obtaining statements
- reviewing electronic or financial records
- seeking professional or specialist advice
- referring matters to external agencies

Where necessary, the Academy may refer matters to the police, safeguarding agencies, the Department for Education, ESFA or another appropriate body.

FAIRNESS AND CONFIDENTIALITY DURING AN INVESTIGATION

The Academy will seek to ensure that investigations are conducted fairly, objectively and proportionately.

Individuals involved in an investigation will be treated fairly.

The person who is the subject of an allegation will normally be given sufficient information about the concern to enable them to respond, subject to safeguarding, confidentiality, legal and investigative considerations.

Individuals involved in a whistleblowing investigation must maintain confidentiality and must not discuss the matter unnecessarily with colleagues or other individuals.

This does not prevent a person from:

- obtaining legal advice
- seeking advice from a trade union or professional association

- making a protected disclosure where permitted by law
- reporting a safeguarding concern to an appropriate statutory agency

TIMESCALES

The Academy will seek to deal with concerns as promptly as reasonably possible.

Some investigations may take longer than others depending on their complexity, the number of people involved, the availability of evidence and whether external agencies are involved.

The person raising the concern will, where possible and appropriate, be informed of:

- whether the concern is being investigated
- the expected timescale
- any significant delays
- when the investigation has been concluded.

The Academy may be unable to provide full details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken because of confidentiality, data protection or employment law obligations.

OUTCOME

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Academy will determine what action, if any, is appropriate.

Possible outcomes may include:

- no further action
- recommendations for improvement
- changes to Academy procedures
- additional training
- management action
- disciplinary action
- safeguarding action
- referral to an external agency
- other appropriate action

The person who raised the concern will normally be informed that the investigation has been concluded and, where appropriate and lawful, provided with a general indication of the outcome.

The Academy may not be able to provide detailed information about action taken against another individual because of confidentiality and data protection requirements.

IF A CONCERN IS NOT SUBSTANTIATED

If a concern is investigated and no wrongdoing is established, this will not, by itself, result in disciplinary action against the person who raised the concern.

The Academy recognises that individuals may raise concerns based on information which they reasonably believe to indicate wrongdoing, even where an investigation subsequently establishes that no wrongdoing occurred.

DELIBERATELY FALSE OR MALICIOUS ALLEGATIONS

The Academy encourages individuals to raise concerns where they reasonably believe that wrongdoing may have occurred.

A concern will not be considered malicious simply because it is not substantiated.

However, where an investigation establishes that an individual has:

- deliberately fabricated an allegation
- knowingly provided false information
- deliberately made a malicious allegation

the matter may be dealt with under the Academy's disciplinary procedure.

The Academy will not use this provision to discourage individuals from raising genuine concerns.

INDEPENDENCE AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Any person responsible for receiving, assessing or investigating a whistleblowing concern must consider whether they have an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

Where a concern relates to:

- a CoHeadteacher
- a member of the senior leadership team
- the Chair or another member of the Governing Board
- the designated whistleblowing contact
- another person who would ordinarily be responsible for dealing with the concern

the matter must be referred to an appropriately independent person.

Where necessary, the Academy may seek assistance from an external investigator, HR adviser, legal adviser, safeguarding professional or other appropriate body.

No person should investigate a concern about themselves.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE GOVERNING BOARD

Where a concern relates to the conduct or actions of the Governing Board, the Chair of the Governing Board or a member of the Governing Board, the concern should not be dealt with by the individual who is the subject of the concern.

The concern should instead be referred to the appropriate independent governing board contact, where applicable.

Where the concern relates to the Academy Trust itself, or the individual considers that internal arrangements are inappropriate or have failed to address the concern, the individual may consider raising the matter with an appropriate external body or prescribed person.

EXTERNAL DISCLOSURES

Individuals are encouraged to raise concerns internally where it is appropriate and safe to do so.

However, whistleblowing legislation does not require a worker to raise every concern internally. Legal

protection for external disclosures depends upon the circumstances and the statutory requirements applicable to the disclosure.

Individuals considering making an external disclosure may wish to obtain independent advice before doing so.

Department for Education

Concerns relating to an academy may be raised with the Department for Education through its whistleblowing arrangements.

Current information is available on GOV.UK under “Blowing the whistle to the Department for Education.”

Protect

Individuals may seek confidential independent advice from Protect, an independent whistleblowing charity.

Safeguarding

For safeguarding concerns, individuals who feel unable to raise the concern internally may contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line on 0800 028 0285.

Other prescribed persons

Depending upon the nature of the concern, an individual may be able to make a disclosure to an appropriate prescribed person or regulatory body.

Individuals should consult the current GOV.UK list of prescribed persons before making an external disclosure.

The Academy will not subject an individual to detriment simply because they have sought appropriate advice or made a disclosure which is legally protected.

RECORD KEEPING AND DATA PROTECTION

The Academy will maintain appropriate records of whistleblowing concerns, investigations and outcomes.

Records will be:

- kept securely
- accessible only to individuals who have a legitimate need to access them
- retained in accordance with the Academy's records retention requirements
- handled in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and the Academy's Data Protection Policy

Information will be shared only where there is a lawful and appropriate basis for doing so.

Safeguarding records will be maintained in accordance with the Academy's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and relevant statutory guidance.

MONITORING AND GOVERNANCE

The Governing Board is responsible for ensuring that the Academy has an appropriate whistleblowing procedure and that the procedure is implemented effectively.

The Academy will ensure that staff are informed about:

- the purpose of this policy
- how to raise a concern
- who they can contact
- the protection available to whistleblowers
- the distinction between whistleblowing and other Academy procedures

The CoHeadteachers will monitor the operation of the policy and report relevant information to the Governing Board, while maintaining confidentiality and complying with data protection requirements.

The Governing Board will review this policy at least annually, or sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, Academy governance arrangements or good practice.

LINKED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This policy should be read alongside:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Capability Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Staff Behaviour Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Financial Regulations and procedures

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy should be read in conjunction with applicable legislation and guidance, including:

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
- Academy Trust Handbook
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance
- relevant Department for Education whistleblowing guidance

KCSIE 2026 is currently in force from 1 September 2026 and applies to schools and colleges in England.

APPENDIX 1 – QUICK REFERENCE FOR STAFF

If you have a concern:

1. Is someone in immediate danger?

Take immediate action. If a child is in immediate danger, call 999.

2. Is it a safeguarding concern?

Report it to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay.

3. Is it suspected wrongdoing in the public interest?

Consider raising it under this Whistleblowing Policy.

4. Is it primarily a personal employment concern?

It may be more appropriate to use the Grievance, Dignity at Work, Capability or another relevant procedure.

5. Does the concern involve your line manager?

Use an alternative contact listed in Appendix 1.

6. Does the concern involve the Headteacher, Co-Headteacher or Governing Board?

Use the independent/trustee whistleblowing contact.

7. Do you feel unable to raise a safeguarding concern internally?

Contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line on 0800 028 0285.

8. Do you need independent whistleblowing advice?

You may seek advice from Protect or another appropriate independent adviser.