



# QUANTOCK

## EDUCATION TRUST

### Whistleblowing Policy

LINKS TO OTHER TRUST POLICIES: Discipline, Conduct and Staff Grievance policy, Complaints policy, Allegations against staff policy, Child Protection & Safeguarding policy

DATE May 2020

POSTHOLDER RESPONSIBLE: Trust HR Officer

TRUSTEES/GOVERNORS COMMITTEE: Welfare

AUDIENCE: All members of the Trust community

STATUS: Ratified (Statutory)

DATE RATIFIED: 13 May 2020

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: (every 3 yrs) September 2023

## 1. Aims

### 1.1. 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 whistle-blowing 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)

1.2. 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 Members, Trustees, Local Governors and also self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

## 2. Legislation

2.1. The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the [Academies Financial Handbook](#).

2.2. This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as [government guidance on whistle-blowing](#). We also take into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

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

## 3. Definition of whistle-blowing

3.1. Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistle-blowing 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

3.2. A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

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

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

3.5. Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- [Further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure

- A free and confidential [advice line](#)

#### 4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern

##### 4.1. When to raise a concern

4.1.1. Staff should consider the examples in section 3 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing 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

4.2.1. School-based staff should report their concern to the headteacher. If the concern is about the headteacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to CEO.

4.2.2. 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 Chair of Trustees.

##### 4.3. How to raise the concern

4.3.1. 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 whistle-blowing concern

##### 5.1. Investigating the concern

5.1.1. When a concern is received by the headteacher - referred to from here 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 whistle-blowing 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:
- The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving another senior leader or member of the HR team as appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In others, they may need to 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

5.2.1. 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 or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

5.2.2.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.

5.2.3.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.

5.2.4.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

6.1. 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.

6.2. 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

7.1. 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](#).

7.2. 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. Approval

8.1. This policy will be reviewed every three years.

8.2. These procedures have been agreed by the board of trustees, who will approve it whenever reviewed.

Produced on behalf of AQA, CCEA, City & Guilds, NCFE, OCR, Pearson and WJEC



## Public Interest Disclosure Act (Whistleblowing)

### Guidance in relation to suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments

This guidance is principally for centre staff who may witness malpractice in examinations and assessments and are unsure about what action to take.

The security and integrity of examinations and assessments is essential if public confidence in qualifications is to be maintained. The approach taken by the awarding bodies to malpractice is set out in the *JCQ Suspected Malpractice* document.

### What should you do if you see malpractice taking place in examinations or assessments?

If you are a candidate or a member of the public, you should report what you witness to the examination centre concerned.

If you work for an examination centre or are involved in examinations or assessments and you witness activity that you are concerned may be malpractice, you should act upon it.

Examination centres are required by the *JCQ Suspected Malpractice* document to refer malpractice to the appropriate awarding body.

You can also refer your concern to the awarding body (see below).

### What if you are concerned about retaliation for reporting suspected malpractice?

If you work for an examination centre or are involved in examinations or assessments it is likely that the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) offers you legal protection from being dismissed or penalised for raising certain serious concerns (“blowing the whistle”). Given the importance of the integrity of the qualifications system, suspected malpractice is likely to be a serious concern.

It is probable that your organisation has a whistleblowing policy. If it does, you should follow that policy. If it does not, you should raise your concern with someone senior within the centre.

If you do not feel safe raising the matter within the centre, or you have done so and are concerned that no action has been taken, you could consider making your disclosure to a “prescribed person” – which includes Ofqual and Qualifications Wales (the regulators in England and Wales respectively). The full list of prescribed persons and bodies are detailed in this guidance:

GovUK: [Blowing the whistle a list of prescribed people and bodies](#)

### Who do you talk to and what happens if you contact the awarding body?

Each awarding body has staff who deal with malpractice. You can talk to them in confidence and explain your concerns. However, as awarding bodies are not prescribed bodies as defined by the PIDA they cannot promise you the legal protections detailed in PIDA.

Cont/d.

The awarding body will:

- Understand the difficult position that you are in;
- Have experience of similar situations; **and**
- Explain the importance of supporting evidence and the sort of evidence that might help in your particular case.

The awarding body will make every effort to protect your identity, if that is what you wish, unless legally obliged to release it (for example, in the course of a police investigation). Please be aware that it will not be possible for the awarding body to provide you with a report on the findings or outcome of any investigation that may ensue.

Which awarding body is contacted will depend on the qualification where malpractice is suspected. You can contact a malpractice expert within the specific awarding body as shown below:

AQA	<a href="mailto:Irregularities@aqg.org.uk">Irregularities@aqg.org.uk</a>	0161 958 3736
CCEA	<a href="mailto:malpractice@ccea.org.uk">malpractice@ccea.org.uk</a>	028 90 261200 ext 2203
City & Guilds	<a href="mailto:investigationandcompliance@cityandguilds.com">investigationandcompliance@cityandguilds.com</a>	020 7294 2775
Pearson	<a href="mailto:pqsmalpractice@pearson.com">pqsmalpractice@pearson.com</a>	020 7190445
OCR	<a href="mailto:malpractice@ocr.org.uk">malpractice@ocr.org.uk</a>	01223 553998
WJEC	<a href="mailto:malpractice@wjec.co.uk">malpractice@wjec.co.uk</a>	029 20265448
NCFE	<a href="mailto:CustomerCompliance@ncfe.org.uk">CustomerCompliance@ncfe.org.uk</a>	0191 2408835

You may find the following websites useful:

[JCO](#)

[Public Concern at Work](#)

[Ofqual](#)