



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: 1st September 2026

POSTHOLDER RESPONSIBLE: Trust HR Director

TRUSTEES/GOVERNORS COMMITTEE: People & Pay

AUDIENCE: All members of the Trust community

STATUS: Draft waiting Trustee ratification

DATE RATIFIED: [Insert date]

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: This policy will be reviewed annually on or before 31 August 2027

Summary of Changes

Version	Section	Description of Changes
May 2020	All	Baseline document
September 2023	All	• Legislation updated with latest information • Definition of whistleblowing updated • Detail added to procedure for whistleblowing • Clarification of how you will be informed of outcome added • Confidentiality and Data protection section added • External disclosures section expanded • If you are not satisfied section added • Protection and support for whistleblowers details added. • Contact details updated
September 2024	Section 12	• Contact details updated
Jan 2025	Section 12	• Contact details updated
August 2026	All	• Updated in line with Browne Jacobson template

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1. Introduction

The Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain these standards in accordance with our Code of Conduct. 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.

This policy has been implemented following consultation with the recognised trade unions. It has been formally adopted by the Trustees.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment or other contract to provide services and we may amend it at any time.

All workforce policies should be implemented in a way that promotes equity, inclusion, wellbeing and equality of opportunity for all staff. In applying policies, leaders and managers should recognise and respond to individual circumstances, consider the potential impact on staff with protected characteristics, disabilities, long-term health conditions, neurodivergence, caring responsibilities and other additional needs and ensure that reasonable adjustments are considered where appropriate. Policies should be applied fairly and consistently but allow for professional judgement where individual circumstances require flexibility. Trust schools should foster a culture of dignity, respect and belonging, monitoring the impact of policy implementation to identify and address any unintended barriers or unequal outcomes.

2. Scope and Purpose

This policy aims 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
- To provide staff with guidance on how to raise concerns.
- To provide staff with guidance on how to raise concerns
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

This policy applies to all employees of the QET, governors, consultants, contractors, casual and agency staff, and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

3. Legislation

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing 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 whistle-blowing](#). We also take into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

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

4. What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. The law provides protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters or "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest by a worker who has a reasonable belief that there are wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- criminal activity;
- miscarriages of justice;
- danger to health and safety;
- damage to the environment;
- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- a disclosure that sexual harassment has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur;
- bribery;
- financial fraud or mismanagement;
- negligence;
- breach of our internal policies and procedures including our Code of Conduct;
- conduct likely to damage our reputation or financial wellbeing;
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- unethical behaviour; and
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy and we will seek to agree with you under which policy the matter being reported will be dealt with.

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.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases, you should use the Grievance Procedure or preventing sexual harassment at work policy, as appropriate.

If a complaint relates to your own personal circumstances but you also have wider concerns regarding one of the areas set out above (for example, a breach of our internal policies), you should discuss with a member of the School/Trust's leadership team which route is the most appropriate.

5. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern

We hope that you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively.

However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your line manager has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, or they are the subject of the complaint, then you can raise the matter with:

- The Headteacher
- The Chair of Governors

Contact details are set out at the end of this policy. Please see Appendix 2.

If your concerns are about allegations of abuse by the Headteacher and the Headteacher is also the sole proprietor of the School, allegations should be reported directly to the designated officer(s) at the local authority. You may consider discussing any concerns with the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead and make any referral via them.

We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

We will take down a written summary of your concern and provide you with a copy after the meeting. We will also aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

6. Confidentiality and data protection

We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.

We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. 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 one of the other contact points listed in paragraph 4.2 and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are given at the end of this policy.

Where we receive anonymous complaints, we will investigate the complaints as far as is reasonable taking into account:

- the seriousness of the issue raised
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources

As part of the application of this policy, the Trust may collect, process and store personal data in accordance with our data protection policy. We will comply with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation (including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018) and any implementing laws, regulations and secondary legislation, as amended or updated from time to time). Records will be kept in accordance with our Workforce Privacy Notice and in line with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation.

7. External disclosures

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.

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

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone externally. Protect holds a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy. Alternatively, the list is available [on GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

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 contractor, supplier or service provider. In some circumstances the law will protect you if you raise a concern with the third party directly where you reasonably believe it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. 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 Appendix 2 for guidance.

8. Investigation and outcome

Once you have raised a concern, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

In some cases, we may appoint an investigator or team of investigators, including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. We may in some circumstances appoint an external person or body to investigate the concern. The investigator(s) will collate findings on the matter, and may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing. This will be sent to the headteacher and/or governing board for actioning. We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation, an outcome, or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

9. If you are not satisfied

While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy, you can help us to achieve this.

If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with one of the other key contacts in Appendix 2. Alternatively, you may contact the Chair of Governors/Trustees. Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

10. Protection and support for whistleblowers

It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats, or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform one of the contact people in Appendix 2 immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.

Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. In some cases, the whistleblower could have a right to sue an individual personally for compensation in an employment tribunal.

A confidential support and counselling hotline is available to whistleblowers who raise concerns under this policy. There contact details are set out in Appendix 2 of this policy.

11. Approval

This policy will be reviewed annually. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure that it is working effectively.

These procedures have been agreed by the Board of Trustees, who will approve it whenever reviewed.

Appendix 1 – Guidance in relation to suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments

In addition to the Whistleblowing policy, the following guidance is principally for centre staff who may witness malpractice in exams and assessments and are unsure about what action to take:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/knowledge-hub/public-interest-disclosure-act-whistleblowing/>

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Appendix 2 – Contacts

Whistleblowing Officer - Headteacher Haygrove	Aaron Reid 01278 455531 areid@sexeyes.somerset.sch.uk
Whistleblowing Officer - Headteacher Sexey's	Steve Clayson 01749 813393 sclayson@sexeyes.somerset.sch.uk
Whistleblowing Officer - Headteacher Spaxton	Rachel Rood 01278 671409 rrood@spaxton-qet.co.uk
Whistleblowing Officer - Headteacher Stogursey	Rachel Rood 01278732389 rrood@quantockedtrust.co.uk
Whistleblowing Officer - Headteacher Ashlands	Nicola Ball 0146073437 nball@ashlandsprimary.school
Whistleblowing Officer - Headteacher Haselbury Plucknett	Lois Bowery 01460 72833 l.bowery@merriottandhaselbury.co.uk
Whistleblowing Officer - Headteacher Merriott	Lois Bowery 01460 72547 l.bowery@merriottandhaselbury.co.uk
Whistleblowing Officer - Headteacher St Bartholomew's	Gemma Coward 01460 72829 gcoward@quantockedtrust.co.uk
Chair of Trustees	Cheryl Govier 01278 455531 clgovier@quantockedtrust.co.uk
Chair of Governors - Haygrove	Jennifer Ashworth 01278 455531 jashworth@quantockedtrust.co.uk
Chair of Governors – Sexey's	Rev Jonathan Evans 01749 813393 jevans@sexeyes.somerset.sch.uk
Chair of Governors -- Spaxton	Andrew Watson 01278 671409 awatson@spaxton-qet.co.uk
Chair of Governors - Stogursey	Bernard Maskell / Jodie Burghes 01278732389 bmaskell@quantockedtrust.co.uk / jburghes@quantockedtrust.co.uk
Chair of Governors – Ashlands	David Harvey 0146073437 dh Harvey@quantockedtrust.co.uk
Chair of Governors – Merriott & Haselbury Plucknett	Craig Pearce 01460 72547 cpearce@quantockedtrust.co.uk
Chair of Governors – St Bartholomew's	Stephen Gray 01460 72829 sgray@quantockedtrust.co.uk
Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: (020) 3117 2520

	Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk
The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline	Helpline: 0800 028 0285 E-mail: help@nspcc.org.uk
Department for Education	Telephone: 0370 000 2288 Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education
Ofqual	Telephone: 0300 303 3344 Website: http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual
Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) / Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS)	Telephone – 0808 800 0082 http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/app/ask Website: Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS) - GOV.UK