

P12 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Last Reviewed:	December 2016
Next Review:	December 2018
Responsible:	Vice Principal: Business Operations
Approved by Governors' Finance & Personnel:	6 December 2016

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Bushey Academy is committed to achieving the highest possible standards of service and ethical standards, and this policy will enable you to raise your concerns of serious wrongdoing without fear of reprisal.
- 1.2. This policy applies to all individuals working for The Bushey Academy at all levels and grades, whether they are employees, contractors, agency, or casual staff.
- 1.3. Other relevant policies and documents to consider when raising a concern are:
 - the academy's policy on child protection and safeguarding
 - the academy's grievance procedures
 - the academy's financial regulations and its policy on fraud
 - the academy's Code of Conduct for employees
 - the academy's policy on health and safety
 - the academy's policy on equal opportunities.

2 WHAT IS 'WHISTLEBLOWING'?

- 2.1 Whistleblowing inside the work place is the term used to describe reporting by employees or ex-employees, of wrongdoing on the part of management, the Governing Body or by fellow employees. Employees may, for this purpose include, for example, contractors and agency workers, and actions which may relate to a third party.
- 2.2. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 lists matters about which concerns can be raised, provided they are in the public interest. These are as follows:
 - That a crime has been committed, is being committed, or is likely to be committed
 - That a person has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligations to which they are subject
 - That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur
 - That the health and safety of an individual has been, is being, or is likely to be endangered
 - That the environment has been, is being, or is likely to be damaged
 - That information tending to show any of the above has been concealed or is likely to be deliberately concealed.
- 2.3. Particular concerns that may fall within the terms of this policy include, for example, breach of code of conduct, willful maladministration and corruption, misuse of funds, theft or fraud.
- 2.4 Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 a Whistleblower is protected from detriment and unfair dismissal. The academy will support and not discriminate

against concerned employees who apply the Whistleblowing procedure, provided any claim is made in good faith.

3 **WHEN SHOULD WHISTLEBLOWING PROCEDURES BE USED?**

- 3.1 If an employee has concerns about wrongdoing at the academy and feels that those concerns are sufficiently serious to require reporting, this procedure outlines what should be done.
- 3.2 Each individual member of staff should feel able to speak freely on such matters. However, the academy and colleagues have the right to protect themselves against unfounded false or malicious accusations.
- 3.3 Whistleblowing should only be used when the party implementing the procedure (Representor) has reasonable grounds for believing that a serious offence has been or may be committed. It must never be used without good grounds, falsely or maliciously.
- 3.4 Whistleblowing is not appropriate for dealing with issues between an employee and the academy which relate to the employee's own employment or rights or employment conditions generally. Alternative dispute resolution procedures for that purpose are outlined in separate relevant procedures.
- 3.5 Whistleblowing is not appropriate for dealing with student complaints, which will be dealt with under separately published procedures.
- 3.6 Whistleblowing is not appropriate to specific cases of child protection or safeguarding which will be dealt with under the specified procedures. If any staff member has concerns that a student is being dealt with unfairly in school, they should raise their concern, in the first instance with the Designated Senior Lead for Child Protection.

4 **THE PROCEDURE**

- 4.1 Any issue raised will be kept confidential while the procedure is being used.
- 4.2 The Representor (the person raising the concern) should raise their concern with their line manager. This may be done orally or in writing.
- 4.3 However, if the concern relates to the Representor's line manager or any person to whom he or she reports, other than the Principal, the Representor should raise the issue with the Principal.
- 4.4 If the concern relates to the Principal, the Representor should raise the matter with the Chair of the Trust.
- 4.5 The person with whom the matter is raised is referred to as the "Assessor".

The Assessor will:

- 4.5.1 Interview the Representor as soon as possible within seven working days, in confidence. Early interview will be essential if the concern relates to an immediate danger to loss of life or serious injury or risk to pupils;
- 4.5.2 Obtain as much information as possible from the Representor about the grounds for the belief of wrongdoing;
- 4.5.3 Consult with the Representor about further steps which could be taken;
- 4.5.4 Advise the Representor of the appropriate route if the matter does not fall under this Procedure;

- 4.5.5 Other than in the case of paragraph 4.4, report all matters raised under this procedure to the Principal.
- 4.6 At the interview with the Assessor, the Representor may be accompanied by a recognised trade union representative or a work colleague. The Assessor may be accompanied by a member of the academy staff to take notes.
- The Assessor may at any time disclose the matter to a professionally qualified lawyer for the purpose of taking legal advice. The Assessor may also discuss the issue, in confidence, with other suitable professionals, such as independent HR consultants or school governance providers in order to assess the nature of the case and to inform the outcome of the investigation.
- 4.7 Promptly within ten working days of the interview, the Assessor will recommend one or more of the following:
- 4.7.1 The matter be further investigated internally by the academy;
 - 4.7.2 The matter be further investigated by external consultants appointed by the academy;
 - 4.7.3 The matter be reported to an external agency;
 - 4.7.4 Disciplinary proceedings be implemented against an employee;
 - 4.7.5 The route for the Representor to pursue the matter if it does not fall within this procedure; or that
 - 4.7.6 no further action is taken by the academy.
- 4.8 The grounds on which no further action is taken include:
- 4.8.1 The Assessor is satisfied that there is no evidence that wrongdoing within the meaning of this procedure has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur;
 - 4.8.2 The Assessor is satisfied that the Representor is not acting in good faith;
 - 4.8.3 The matter is already (or has been) the subject of proceedings under one of the academy's other procedures or policies;
 - 4.8.4 The matter concerned is already (or has been) the subject of legal proceedings, or has already been referred to an external agency.
- 4.9 The recommendation of the Assessor will be made to the Principal. However, should it be that the Principal is the assessor or it is alleged that the Principal is involved in the alleged wrongdoing; the recommendation will be made to the Chair of the Trust.
- 4.10 The Principal or Chair of the Governing Body, as appropriate, will ensure that the recommendation is implemented unless there is good reason for not doing so in whole or in part. Such a reason will be reported to the next meeting of the Governing Body.
- 4.11 The Representor's identity will be kept confidential unless the Representor otherwise consents or unless there are grounds to believe that the Representor has acted maliciously. In the absence of such consent or grounds, the Assessor will not reveal the identity of the Representor except:
- 4.11.1 Where the Assessor is under a legal obligation to do so;
 - 4.11.2 Where the information is already in the public domain; or

4.11.3 On a legally privileged basis to a professionally qualified lawyer for the purpose of obtaining legal advice.

4.12 The conclusion of any agreed investigation will be reported by the Assessor to the Representor promptly within twenty eight working days of the initial interview.

4.13 All responses to the Representor will be made in writing and sent to the Representor's home address.

4.14 If the Representor has not had a response within the above time limit or such reasonable extension as the academy requires, the Representor may go to an appropriate external agency, under paragraph 6, but will inform the Assessor before doing so.

4.15 The Representor may at any time disclose the matter on a confidential basis to a solicitor or trade union representative for the purpose of taking legal advice.

5 MALICIOUS ACCUSATIONS

5.1 A deliberately false or malicious accusation made by a Representor is a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under the academy's disciplinary procedures, as well as potentially exposing the Representor to legal liability.

6 INFORMING EXTERNAL AGENCIES

6.1 Within the academy all staff have a duty of confidentiality. The duty of confidentiality is implied by the law in every contract of employment and prohibits employees from publicly disclosing employers' confidential information, unless it is in the public interest that the information is disclosed or unless the academy fails to follow required procedures. Other legal restrictions on the disclosure of information, for example under data protection legislation, may also apply.

6.2 Whistleblowing to an external agency without first going through the internal procedure is a breach of the academy's Code of Conduct. The external agencies which may be used if disclosure is permitted under paragraph 6.1 are:

6.2.1 Department for Education (EFA);

6.2.2 Member of Parliament;

6.2.3 National Audit Office;

6.2.4 Health and Safety Executive;

6.2.5 Police.

6.3 If you do not feel able to raise your concerns in the ways outlined above, you should consult the Public Interest Disclosure Act for information about other routes by which a disclosure can be made.

6.4 Whistleblowing to the media is not appropriate or permitted in any circumstances.

7 CONFIDENTIAL EMPLOYEE ENQUIRIES

7.1 Employees may, on a confidential basis seek prior guidance from the Principal if they wish to establish whether any course of conduct on their part or on the part of another employee may amount to wrongdoing under these procedures. Such enquiry shall be kept confidential. The Principal will attempt to provide guidance on the basis of the information provided, but such guidance shall not prejudice the rights of the academy or any person under these procedures.

8 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

- 8.1 The Governing Body will assess the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the academy.
- 8.2 This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every two years.

9 **HISTORY**

Version	Last Updated	Changes	Approved
1	December 2014	Full Review	FGB
2	6 December 2016	1 - New Introduction, 2 – further clarification, 4.15 addition, 6.3 addition, 9 addition	F&PC